

REFLECTIONS ON THE
NATURE AND PROPERTY OF
LANGUAGES IN GENERAL
AND ON THE ADVANTAGES, DEFECTS,
AND MANNER OF IMPROVING THE
ENGLISH TONGUE IN PARTICULAR
(1731)



THOMAS STACKHOUSE

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REFLECTIONS

ON THE

Nature and Property

OF

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And on the

ADVANTAGES, DEFECTS,

AND

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THE

ENGLISH TONGUE

In Particular.

By the Reverend Mr. THOMAS STACKHOUSE,
Author of the Complete *Body of Divinity*.

L O N D O N:

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THE

PREFACE.



THE following Treatise, is, in a great Measure, form'd upon the Plan of Mr. Du Tremblay, once Professor of Languages, in the Royal Academy of Angiers: And that the Reader may not be at a Loss for the Knowledge of several Things; which, in the Course of the Work, are either mention'd, or alluded to; I thought it not improper to premise the best Account, that I could learn, of the Controversy, which, for some Years, continued in France, and occasion'd our Author, among other Wits of the first Rank, to employ his Pen as an Arbitrator in it.

In the Reign of Lewis XIII. about the Year 1629, there was a famous

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Club

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Club at Paris, made up of Men of uncommon Merit and Learning; who met every Week in a familiar Conversation, talk'd about News, about Books, about other indifferent Matters; and, when any among them was upon publishing a Work, had it read in Common, and gave their Thoughts and Observations upon it, before it appear'd in Print.

This Club continu'd for upwards of three or four Tears, in the greatest Amity and Innocence imaginable, and with incredible Profit and Pleasure to themselves; till at length Cardinal Richelieu got Intelligence of them, and, as he had a Mind naturally turn'd to great Undertakings, was a passionate Lover of the French Tongue; and himself no mean Composer in it; he thought, that so learned and ingenious a Set of Men might be apply'd to the Glory and Ornament of their Country, if they were once brought into a regular Society, and establish'd by proper Authority.

He

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He offer'd them therefore, not only his own Favour and Protection, but the King's Letters Patent, to legitimize their Meetings; and pressed the Thing with so much Importunity, that they could not well refuse accepting it: so that, on the 10th of July, in the Year 1637, they held their first Assembly, under the Name of the French Academy, in the House of their illustrious Protector.

The Design of this Academy, and its first Institution (as their * excellent Historian tells us) was to refine the French Tongue to such a Degree, as to maké it capable of the most exalted Eloquence. And, to this purpose, they propos'd to draw up two large Treatises of Rhetorick and Poetry, in order to reform the then-current manner of Writing, both in Verse and Prose. But before they came to that, they found a Grammar would be needful to explain the several Parts of Speech, and both

(a 2) their

* Mr. Pellison, pag. 77-

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their regular and irregular Constructions; and above all a Dictionary, to be, as it were, a Treasure and Magazine both of their simple Words, and receiv'd Phrases. But of all this Project nothing has yet appear'd, but their Dictionary, which was begun upon the Plan, which Mr. Chapelin presented in 1639, continued by the Joint-Labour of the whole Fraternity, and cost them indeed so much time, (for it was not finish'd till 1694) that it is an hard matter to guess, when their other three Works, (no less necessary, and perhaps not much less difficult) are to see the Light.

The Fame of this Academy, at its first Institution, rais'd a Spirit of Emulation throughout the whole Kingdom: The Court came readily into a Project of the Prime Minister's abetting; Persons of the greatest Quality gave in their Names; and Men of all Sciences and Professions were encourag'd to send in their Doubts and Observations, to facilitate the great Undertaking.

Nay,

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Nay, the Spirit of Emulation spread itself so far, that in several other Cities of the Kingdom, such as Soissons, Nismes, Caën, Arles, Angiers, &c. Societies of the same Nature were set up; some of which, by the Letters of their Institution, were oblig'd to send, every Year, * a Piece of Eloquence to the Academy of Paris, which us'd to be read in Publick. So that the Improvement of their Language, at this time, seems to have been the universal Study and Inclination of the Kingdom; but this Zeal abated upon the Death of the Cardinal, and under the Administration of his Successor, who was not such a Lover of the French, and their Language, was quite extinct.

These several Societies however, had not long proceeded in their Undertaking, before they met with great Opposition from such as admir'd the Ancients, and would allow nothing to be Praiseworthy, but what came from them.

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“ The

* Mr. Pellison, pag. 76.

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“ The French, they said, was a weak
“ and simple Language, of an uncertain
“ Signification, of a small Compass
“ and Extent, that had no Strength,
“ no Beauty, no Elegance of its own;
“ was, in short, but a derivative
“ Medley, and incapable to be fashion’d
“ into any Form or Figure of Eloquence,
“ and so they decry’d the whole Design
“ as a mere Chimera.

What contributed to hasten the Dispute, was some considerable Successes the King had obtain’d against his Enemies, and the great desire Cardinal Richelieu had to perpetuate the Memory of them, and of the Rank, which he held in the Administration, when the Kingdom was blessed with such Prosperity.

The Square in Paris, that is called la Place Royal, every one knows, that has been there. It is shewn to all Strangers, as one of the most beautiful Parts of the Town, and, what is its great Ornament, is the Effigies of Lewis XIII. on Horseback, which the
Cardinal

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Cardinal caused to be erected in 1639, upon a large Pedestal of white Marble; but in what Language the Inscriptions were to be written, occasion'd the Dispute.

The Latin Tongue had been a long while in Possession of these Matters, and, for its Brevity and Expressiveness, was thought the only one proper for the Lapidary-Stile: But the Cardinal, who (as I said before) was a great Lover of the French, was willing to try the Strength of his new-appointed Academy, and what the Power of that Language could produce. Accordingly he gave large Encouragement and Rewards to such, as should excel in any kind of French Composition, whether it was Verse or Prose. However, to satisfy both Parties, he order'd the Inscriptions to be in both Languages; and so I have set them down, in the manner they are engraven on the Pedestal, that the Reader may compare them together and judge.

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*On the Face of the Pedestal towards St.
Antony's-Street.*

POUR LA GLORIEUSE ET IM-
-MORTELLE MEMOIRE
du
tres-grand, et tres-invincible
LOUIS LE JUSTE,
XIII du nom. Roy de France
et de Navarre
ARMAND Cardinal, Duc de *Richelieu*,
son principal Ministre dans
tous ses illustres et genereux Desseins,
Comblé d'Honneurs, et de Bien-
faits par un si bon Maitre, et
un si genereux Monarque, lui
a fait elever cette Statue :
Pour une Marque eternelle de son Zele,
de sa Fidelitie, et de sa
Reconnoissance. 1639.

On that towards the Menimes.

LUDOVICO XIII. CHRISTIANISSIMO,
Gallie et Navarre Regi,
Iusto, pio, felici, victori,
Triumphatori,
Semper augusto,
ARMANDUS Cardinalis,
Dux Richellius,
Præcipuorum Regni Onerum
adjutor
et administer,
Domino optimè merito, principique
Munificentissimo,
Fidei sue, Devotionis,
Et ob innumera Beneficia, im-
mensosque Honores.
Sibi Collatos,
Perenne grati Animi monumentum
hanc Statuam Equestrem
ponendam Curavit
Anno Dom. 1639.

There

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There are, besides these, two other Inscriptions, one in French and the other in Latin Verse, but they are of later Composition, and were Engraven upon the Pedestal, long after the Cardinal's Death ; the Reader however may have some desire to know them.

On the Right-Hand.

POUR LOUIS LE JUST
SONNET.

Que ne peut la vertu, que ne peut le Courage ?
J'ay dompté pour jamais l'Herésie en son fort,
Du Tage impérieux j'ay fait trembler le Bord
Et du Rhin jusqu' a l'Ebre' accru mon Heritage.
J'ay sauvé par mon Bras l'Europe d'Esclavage :
Et si tant de travaux n'eussent hâté mon sort,
J'eusse attaqué l'Asie, et d'un pieux effort
J'eusse du Saint Tombeau vangé le long Servage.
ARMAND le grand Armand, d'ame de mes exploits,
Porta de toutes parts mes Armes & mes Loix,
Et donna tout l'éclat aux Rayons de ma Gloire.
Enfin il m' eleva ce pompeux Monument,
Ou pour rendre à son Nom. Memoire pour Memoire,
Je veux qu'avec le mien, il vive incessamment.

On the Left-Hand.

Quod Bellator *Hydros* pacem spirare Rebelles,
Deplumes trepidare *Aquilas*, mitescere *Pardos*,
Et depressa jugo submittere Colla *Leones*,
Despectat *Lupoicus*, equo sublimis ahenò,
Non Digniti, non Artifices fecere Camini,
Sed virtus et plena Deo Fortuna peregit.
ARMANDUS vindex Fidei pacisque sequester
Augustum curavit opus ; populiſque verendam
Regali voluit Statuam consurgere Circo.
Ut post Civilis depulsa pericula Belli
Et circum-domitos armis felicibus Hostes
Eternum Dominâ *Lupoicus* in urbe triumphet.

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*As soon as the French Tongue had made this stand, and shewn its Capacity for greater Compositions, it was not long before it had its Advocates. Mr. Charpentier, in his Treatise of its Excellency, has said a great deal in its Commendation, and shewn that it is as full, and significant, and every way as well fitted for Devises, and publick Inscriptions, to explain our Thoughts, and record the Memory of Facts, as any of the Ancients ever were. Mr. Laboureur has gone farther; for he pleads not only for an Equality, but a Superiority over the Latin Tongue, especially in the plain and natural Order of its Construction, which he makes the chief Requisite of any Speech. Slusius indeed answers him with a great deal of Vivacity, and good Sense; but, what is his Adversary's main Argument, viz. the Simplicity of Construction, he seems to give up, and has made his Answers so very short, that he rather plays upon
the*

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the Surface of the Question, than makes it a Matter of solemn Debate.

The Controversy about Words drew on a Dispute about Things; and Mr. Perrault, in his Parallels, has, by an Induction of several Instances, shewn the Sufficiency of the French Tongue for all kinds of Composition, both in Verse and Prose, and that their Orators and Historians, their Poets and Philosophers, have, in their several kinds of Writing, equall'd, if not out-done the Greeks and Latins.

He had a powerful Adversary; for Boileau, in his Reflections on Longinus, undertakes to answer him; but does it, I think, with so much Heat and Passion, as sadly impairs the Weight of what he says. Some Pains he takes indeed to vindicate the Reputation of Homer and Virgil, but he goes no farther into Question, than the Hint, which the Author, he comments on, gives him, and, (notwithstanding all the hard Names, wherewith he loads his Adversary) has left the rest of the Ancients almost all unde-

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undefended, and the whole Body of the Moderns in the full Possession of the Praises, that Perrault gives them.

This Strife and Contention among learned Men rais'd the Wits of the Age, and occasion'd the Publication of several Things, that were wrote with great Vivacity of Imagination. The War of the Authors, Parnassus reform'd, and the Account of the late Troubles, that happened in the Kingdom of Eloquence, are all entertaining Pieces; but what shews the Strength of Fancy, and Neatness of Raillery most, is the Poetick History of the War lately Proclaim'd between the Ancients and Moderns. The whole indeed is a fine Allegory, boldly carried on, and wrote in the Epick Manner. The Choice of their Generals, the Composition of their Armies, the Order of their March, and the Manner of their Battle, their Councils and Embassies, their Speeches, and other important Actions, are all related on with such Strength of Wit, and Solidity

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Solidity of Judgment, that, besides the Beauty of the Allegory, they form a very curious Piece of Criticism, to such, as are conversant in the Art, and acquainted with the Authors.

The Author, who is here offer'd to the English Reader, in all Probability was one of the latest, that came into the Dispute. He sets himself up for a Judge and Arbitrator between the contending Parties, and (what was wanting before) establishes Rules, whereby to direct himself and others in the Disquisition of so nice a Controversy. His Rules are good, his Decision just, and the Reasons he gives for publishing his Sentiments with so much Freedom, are compriz'd in the short Advertisement preceding his Book.

*“ At one time or other, says he, a
“ more sufficient Pen perhaps may un-
“ dertake this Argument; but, till that
“ comes to pass, this little Treatise
“ may be of some use, to disabuse
“ the World; to put a stop to those
“ immo-*

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“ *immoderate Praises, which are heap’d*
“ *upon the Ancients, to the Prejudice*
“ *of the Moderns; and to let us see,*
“ *that the Contempt and Disparage-*
“ *ment, which the Admirers of Anti-*
“ *quity throw upon the latter, has not*
“ *all the Foundation in Reason, that*
“ *they imagine. It will be of use, at*
“ *least, to convince us, that no one*
“ *Dispute can less deserve the Study*
“ *and Application of the Learned;*
“ *since, tho’ we were agreed about*
“ *Rules, whereby to determine the*
“ *Question, we shall still want a dis-*
“ *interested Judge to apply them, as*
“ *long as Prejudice prevails, and Men*
“ *are wedded to a Party.*



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REFLECTIONS

ON

Languages in General,

AND THE

ENGLISH TONGUE

In Particular.

CHAP. I.

The INTRODUCTION.

IT is scarce to be imagin'd, but that those, who apply themselves to the Improvement of their own Tongues, shou'd conceive so good an Opinion of them, as to think they might be brought, at least to equal, if not to excel, such as are in most esteem, viz. the *Latin*, and the *Greek*. But since
Lan-

Languages cannot be improv'd without the Assistance of Sciences, and these Sciences are usually learnt from *Latin* and *Greek* Authors; it hence comes to pass, that others are naturally carried into a fond Admiration of these two Tongues, in preference to all the rest.

This different way of thinking has so divided the Opinions of a great part of the learned World about the Merit of *Modern* Languages, that some have extoll'd them above the *Ancients*, while others have debas'd and undervalu'd them so, as to think there is no room for the least Comparison.

'Tis not long ago since a Controversy of this Nature became very famous in *France*, upon the Subject of *Inscriptions* on publick Monuments. Those that were Advocates for the *Latin* Tongue, were of Opinion, that no other was proper to preserve the Memory of such great Actions, as were done about that time; but their Adversaries contended that the *French* was equally capable to all kinds of Composition with all imaginable Success, and that it should the rather be employ'd than any other, both in point of esteem for ones *Native Language*, and in hopes of advancing it to the same Beauties and Perfections, that the *Greeks* and *Latins* procured to theirs.

On this Occasion I took upon me to examine the Reasons of those, who so much depreciate our *Tongue*; and I find that they are no otherwise ground'd, than upon a mere Prepossession, which adheres to almost all such as have been Educated in Schools, occasion'd by the high Sentiments of Esteem and Respect for *Greek* and *Latin*, which Masters take care to infuse into

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into their Pupils, in prejudice to their Mother *Tongues*.

Nature however and Reason have no hand in producing such Sentiments, as may justly be call'd Unnatural; since 'tis no less criminal, and against the Laws of Nature, to Rebel against one's Native *Tongue*, than against one's Native Country.

Upon enquiry into this matter, I find that Men undertake to make Parallels in *Tongues* on pure Prepossession; that consulting Reason and Nature we must be persuaded of the great Impossibility of making such Parallels, with a sufficient exactness, to form any certain Judgment of the Merit of each in particular, and of the Advantages which some have over others; since to effect this, we must not only have an equal knowledge of them all, but also a *Model* of Perfection, wherein the whole World is agreed, to compare them by, and especially, an unbiass'd Opinion, and Impartiality, with regard to them all.

'Tis certain that no Man can keep his Mind long in such a disposition; for however Impartial we may be in other respects, we all of us have a greater affection for one *Tongue* than another; and what we best love, will always appear most beautiful to us: Nor do we understand them all alike, and consequently must be induc'd to prefer that which we understand best. But, in fine, if we were void of Prepossession, and had an equal knowledge of them all, yet by what Rule can we Measure them, so as to make a certain Judgment, and thereby give any of them a just Preference?

If Angels indeed spoke such a *Language* as Men could understand (as St. Paul seems to intimate they do) that *Language* might well be a Model of Perfection to us : And such Tongues as came nearest to it, would undoubtedly merit the first Rank and Esteem. But we want this Model, and if, in defect thereof, we suppose, that a *Language* is arriv'd to the utmost Perfection it is capable of ; when, for instance, it is become proper to treat of all sorts of Subjects, in all kind of Stiles, with all the most Exquisite Beauties and Richness of Eloquence ; we may still say that every other *Tongue*, is susceptible of the same Perfection, as much as the *Greek* and *Latin* ; Provided it be as well Cultivated by Men as Learned and Judicious as were the *Greeks* and *Romans* : And consequently, *Tongues*, consider'd in themselves, and according to their Nature, are all perfectly equal.

The Design which I propose is to prove this Equality ; and in Order to Execute it with some Method, I shall first examin what *Tongues* are in themselves, according to their *Origin*, their *Progress*, their *Declension*, and their entire *Extinction*. I shall then trace all the Qualities which make them estimable, such as *Purity* and *Elegance* of Terms, *Nobleness* of Expression, and the *Number* and *Cadence* of their Periods. By this discussion, I hope to convince all reasonable Men, that there is no solid Grounds for applauding some *Tongues* so much above all others ; and to shew them withal what Degrees of Improvement any *Tongue* has hitherto attain'd, or is farther capable of.

But

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But before I enter upon my Subject, it will be necessary to advertise my Reader, that I only consult Nature and Reason, and that the Ear and Imagination ought to have no share in this Decision, because they are both naturally preposess'd in favour of some particular *Tongue*; for 'tis certain that neither the Ear nor Imagination can be perfectly inform'd only of the Pronunciation, and Cadence of one *Tongue*, and therefore cannot have a true Relish of the Number and Harmony of others, and consequently cannot form any certain Judgment about them.

I doubt not but at first sight of what I have now advanc'd, great Numbers will object, and say, "What, Exclude the Ear and Imagination from a Right of Judging *Tongues*?" "What is there, wherein they are better qualified, than in this? But their Jurisdiction has its bounds; It extends only to the Terms and Expressions of such *Tongues*, as they have a true Taste of, and to the Stiles of the different Authors who wrote in such *Tongues*; that is properly speaking, to their Native *Tongues*; For in those only can they be truly inform'd. But when we come to talk of *Tongues* in General, 'tis Reason only that ought to pronounce Judgment, because that alone is void of Interest and Prepossession, at least, that alone has the most sufficient Lights to make an Impartial Decision, and that I conceive will be to reduce them all to an Equality.

It may be thought strange perhaps that I should maintain an Equality of *Languages*, without comparing them altogether; or that I should compare them, without understanding them:

But to this I answer, that I do not compare *Tongues* one with another. For I have already said, that this Matter appear'd to me impossible; yet I believe I can, nevertheless, conclude upon this Equality, from some general Notions of what Constitutes a *Tongue*, and makes its Merit and Excellence. I do not know other Men in particular, I hardly know my self; and yet, from the General Idea which I have of human Nature, I may conclude all Nations to be alike in what appertains to that Nature; and that they are equally capable of Arts and Sciences, of Virtues and of Vices.

But as there are particular Men more learned, and more capable of Maxims of Virtue than others; so it may be said that there are *Tongues* more susceptible of the beauties of *Language* than others: And to this I answer, that tho' one Man cannot possibly become so Eloquent, nor so Wise and Virtuous as another may be, (because the *Almighty*, who form'd Mankind, has distributed Natural Talents to each, as it seemeth good to him) yet the *Tongue* of any one Nation, may receive all the Beauties and Politeness, that any other can boast of.

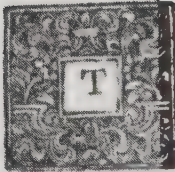
But the real and actual (it may be reply'd) and not the possible and imaginary perfection of *Tongues* is here the Question; on the contrary, I say, that the possible perfection is the point in question; since in some certain Compositions, we cannot prefer one *Tongue* to another, but upon a supposition, that the other can never be carry'd to a State of Perfection capable of succeeding in such Compositions. For if we are satisfy'd that it might, we ought to make no Difficulty of employing it, especially if it is our Native

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Native *Tongue*; to the end, that by frequent use it may acquire an Aptitude, which as yet it may possibly want; and 'tis to discountenance the disadvantageous Opinion which we may possibly entertain of the Capacities of our own *Tongue*, that I write this little Treatise.

We should indeed be prepossess'd in Favour of our own *Tongue*, if we are ever minded to Cultivate it in earnest; for if the *Greeks* and *Romans* had esteem'd their several *Tongues*, no more than some of our Learned Men do ours; they never cou'd have rais'd them, to that high degree of perfection, which so deservedly makes them the admiration of all Learned and Judicious Men. And their Success in that Attempt, is enough to Animate our Zeal and Emulation, to carry our *Tongue*, (which is capable of as great a Perfection as any) to as high a Degree of Beauty and Politencis, as the joint Endeavours of every Learned Man can raise it. And let but every Nation be persuaded that they can make as much of their *Language*, and bring it to the same Height, that other Nations have done before them, and it will not be long before they will set about the Improvement and Perfection of it.

C H A P. II.

What a Tongue is.

H O' no Subject has had more Pens employ'd about it, than that of Languages ; yet I have not seen any Author, who has given us a precise Idea ; that is to say, who has Clearly Defin'd to us, the True Nature of a *Tongue*, and what it is in General.

That which Monsieur *Furetiere* tells us, viz. *That a Tongue signifies a Train of Words, wherein a People are agreed to make themselves understood to each other ;* is not at all a perfect definition. I shall therefore take the freedom to add something to it, which may make it more full, clear and intelligible, where it is Defective.

What we call a *Tongue* then, is, *A Train, or Collection of Certain Articulate Sounds, proper to be united, whereof a People makes use to signify Things, and Communicate their Thoughts ; and which, in themselves, are Indifferent to signify one Thought, or one Thing, no more than another.*

To explain this Definition farther : I say, *A Tongue is a Train or Collection of Articulate Sounds, because those Sounds, which are contain'd in Dictionaries, have naturally no more Connexion between them, than the Stones which form an Heap ; nor can they acquire it but by Composition, any more than those Stones can form a Regular Building without the Artful Disposition of a Mason.*

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I call them *Articulate Sounds*, to distinguish between them and the Cry of Beasts, and even of Men themselves, when agitated by Passion, which have no Articulations, because they are made with one and the same opening of the Mouth, one and the same Motion of the Organ, and one and the same Impulse of the Air; and consequently cannot signify any thing, but certain Natural Emotions or Passions: Whereas *Articulate Sounds* are form'd by different Movements of the Organ, which breaking the Air, differently do produce either different Syllables, which are as it were Members whereof those Sounds are compos'd, or different Letters necessary to compose Syllables; for Letters are but parts of Syllables: Excepting Vowels, which are Sounds of themselves, and intirely united.

It is farther necessary, *that these Sounds should be proper to be united*, because otherwise they could never make such a Composition as is necessary to form a Discourse. And this properly consists in the Conformity of the Pronunciation of Words and their Terminations; and in the Inflection of *Nouns* and *Verbs*, which makes, what we ordinarily call, the Analogy of a *Tongue*. Without these Conformities, Words cou'd not unite themselves in an easy and agreeable manner, *viz.* easy to be pronounc'd, and agreeable to be heard.

The proof of what I say, may appear, by mixing together, Words of divers *Tongues*, where the one may require a Stronger, the other an Easier pronunciation: All *Tongues* are in themselves thus opposite, for there are none, but what have different and contrary Pronunciations. We shou'd find then, that such a
Mixture

Mixture or Conjunction of Words would be of a harsh pronunciation, and consequently disagreeable to the Ear; And should feel the same pain and difficulty to pronounce them, as we should to ascend or descend a Ladder, whose Rounds are of an unequal distance, so that we must either shorten or widen each step we take, which cannot be done without much fatigue and great caution. And in like manner, in a Discourse, compos'd as before mention'd, it wou'd be necessary, that, at every Word, the Organs of the Voice shou'd change their Tension, that they shou'd make great Efforts to pronounce a Word that is harsh and strong, and immediately relax themselves again to pronounce another Word that is more smooth and easy; which cou'd not fail of equally fatiguing both the Speaker and the Hearer, for the Hearer always feels the Pain of the Speaker.

These Words wou'd still have something more disagreeable, by reason of their Dissonance, and could not form that Cadence and Harmony, which is necessary to please the Ear. They would be like a Building, compos'd of pieces of different Orders, which could not be agreeable to the Sight, because the Parts cou'd have no just proportion.

These are some of the Reasons, why the Sounds, which Compose the same *Tongue*, ought to have an Analogy, by a Conformity of their Articulation and Termination; they ought to have the same in the *Inflexion* of Nouns and Verbs, since if every one, in expressing their Thoughts, changed *Nouns* and *Verbs* according to their fancy, Men could not understand one another; and there would properly be no such thing

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thing as a *Tongue* at all, because no one People or Nation wou'd use the same.

I have added, that *these Sounds were in themselves indifferent to signify all sorts of Thoughts, and Things*; since a reason cannot be given, why one Term, shou'd signify rather one Thought or one Thing, than another: We must in this case have recourse to common Practice and Custom, which has thus establish'd it, by a certain Train or Connexion of Causes, wherein Human Prudence has hardly had any share.

The same may be said of Articulate Sounds or Words, in regard to the Thoughts and Things they signify, as may be said of the Figures, which are call'd Letters, in regard to Words or Sounds. It is only by Custom and Use that such a Figure signifies such a Sound, and if Custom and Use had thought fit, that same Figure, might signify a quite different Sound. For instance, the Letter *A*. might signify, that which is intended by the Letter *B*: And in like manner the Word *Hatred*, might signify that which is meant by the Word *Love*, and so on the contrary. Excepting only some particular Sounds, which have been form'd, upon certain Cries, and certain Natural Movements, in order to express some certain Passions and Affections of Men's Minds.

The reason whereof is this, that the Articulate Sounds, of which *Tongues* are compos'd, are not properly Words; They are only the Voice of a Word, as *St. Augustin* has it, *vox verbi*. The true Word is all Spiritual, because it is nothing else but the Thought, which becomes
Sensible

Sensible, and Incarnates it self, as it were, with the Articulate Sounds to which it is joined, in order to make it pass into the Intellects of those, whose Ears are struck by the Sounds; or rather to give birth to, and render the same Ideas present to the Understanding of the Hearer. And to these Articulate Sounds are given the Name of Words, because they are the Sign, or the voice of Words, even as we give the Name of the King, to the King's Picture.

'Tis for this reason, that we ordinarily place these Signs among what we call Signs of Institution, which are oppos'd to Natural Signs. But I am of Opinion, that if there are no Signs truly Natural, there also no Signs of pure Institution; and it may be said that in reality they partake both of Institution and Nature. *Aulus Gellius* speaks of a Grammarian who would have it, that they were Natural, and not positive Signs, *Non Positiva sed Naturalia*, but the Reasons which he alledges do no way prove it. *Arnobius* * on the contrary was of Opinion, that they were the Works of Reason, *Humana ista sunt placita*. *Scalliger* chose a Medium, and wou'd have it, that the first words were made by chance, *Temere orta*, but that others were the work of Reflection; yet there is in these Opinions, something which is not altogether true.

I should then believe, that there is more reason to say, that these Signs are positive, in as much as they have no Analogy with the things they denote; and that they are Natural,
in

* *Lib. 3. de caus. Ling. lat. cap. 68.*

of LANGUAGES. 13

in that they have establish'd themselves without the design or Consultation of Men. For which reason, such as treat of *Tongues* do not appear to me to be exact enough, when they suppose an Agreement between Men, to establish the use of certain Terms, in order to signify certain Things; as I hope to make appear in the following Chapter.

At present this is what appears to me to be the most exact Notion of what we call a *Tongue*: but I am ready to retract my own Opinion, when any person shall shew me another, that is juster.



CHAP. III.

The trifling Notions of some Philosophers about the Origin of Tongues.



PHILOSOPHERS have sought out the Origin of *Tongues*, but the most part of them have no better succeeded in the search, than, in that which they have made into the Origin of Men. What has been said by *Epicurus*, *Lucretius*, *Diodorus Siculus*, *Vitruvius*, and some others, must be look'd upon as mere Dreams; and we cannot sufficiently wonder that there are, at this Day, Men of Wit, who find even the least probability in their Opinions; but it is very common, with some to approve of Thoughts, which they never have examined.

What

What these Philosophers have imagin'd is this. They thought that Men (whether the work of Hazard, or of some Intelligent Being) did not speak at first, but finding in themselves a necessity for a Correspondence with one another, and being desirous to Communicate their Thoughts, and Wills, in order to procure the necessary Succours of Life, they first used a Gesture of the Hand, the Head, the Eyes, &c. as signs to make themselves understood; And that at length, having found the facility of moving the *Tongue* all manner of ways to form all sorts of Sounds, they judged *that* alone the most proper Member to be us'd, in expressing those sort of Sounds; and thus, in process of time, they compos'd themselves a *Tongue*. Thus far these Philosophers have imagin'd, and would thereby insinuate, that Men, having try'd several Methods to make themselves understood, at last concluded upon the Signs of the Voice, as the most Commodious.

But we need no long Hesitation to perceive that nothing is more trifling than this, and that it was impossible for Men to attain to themselves a *Tongue* this way: For it cannot be explain'd to us, how Men that knew not how to speak as yet, could ever agree upon a set form of Words to express their Thoughts in. We indeed may teach Children, who as yet know not how to speak our *Tongue*, because amongst our selves, our *Tongue* is certain and establish'd; and when we talk to Children, or in their presence, we always use the same Terms, to signify the same Thoughts and the same Things; which at length accustoms them also,

to

of LANGUAGES. 15

to use the same Terms, to the same Purpose.

Ingenious Men, who already are Masters of one *Tongue*, might even invent another entirely New, by the Model of that, which they already know. But Men who never yet could speak, could in no wise determine what Sorts of Sounds to employ or use in Speaking. Words are the Means whereby Men agree on all Things; Men could not therefore agree upon Words, without Words themselves. If Spectacles, which assist the Eye-Sight, cannot be made without the help of the Eye, so we may say, that a *Tongue* compos'd of Words, cannot be made without the help of Words.

To give a more perfect Idea of what I say, let us represent to ourselves a Multitude of Men, sprung all of a sudden, out of the Earth like Mushrooms, or fallen from the Clouds like Frogs; each of them arrived at a perfect Age (for there is a Necessity to suppose that) and assembling themselves together in Order to Compose a Language. These Men, without doubt, would be very much astonished at the Sight of one another, and it is a very difficult Matter to conceive what their Thoughts might be upon this Occasion. But since their Composing of a *Tongue* is the Question, it must be suppos'd that they would fain speak; and there is much Reason to believe they would if they could, supposing them to be made with Passions like us; since the first Desire we have, when we meet a Man whom we never saw before, is to speak to him. But of what should this suppos'd Multitude speak, since as yet they know not how? You'll say perhaps they would speak of their Necessaries; that is
if

if they could, they would speak, when press'd by Thirst or Hunger, Heat or Cold; or some other Inconvenience, whereof they might seek to ease themselves by Natural Instinct. Suppose then they already find, or are some way sensible of this Inconvenience, What will they do to render themselves understood to each other, and to Ask, or Offer Mutual Succours? They would, no doubt, send forth no Articulate Sounds, but Cries like Brute Animals, or dumb Persons; and each would send out his Cry according to his Fancy. This is *Arnobus's* Opinion, somewhere in his Book against the Gentiles, where he derides the Thought whereof I am now speaking. "A Man who never heard Articulate Voices, can never do any thing but Cry. lib. 2. *Nonne Vocem si fuerit Necessitate Aliqua coactus emittere, ut Solemne est Multis inarticulatum Nescio quid, ore biante Clamabit?*

This new made Race of Men then I say, would rather send forth Crys than Words; because they could have no more aptitude to articulate their Voices than Infants have, since our own Experience shews us that the facility of Articulation is only contracted by Imitation. Children accustom themselves to articulate their Voices in Imitation of their Nurses and Parents; but if they never heard other People do it, they themselves would never articulate their own.

Mutes are a Demonstrative Proof of this, since 'tis certain that their want of Speech is owing to their want of Hearing. This passes for so constant a Truth, that what is said of a certain King, who (to discover what Language was Natural to Man) caus'd Infants to be Nourish'd and brought up by Dumb Persons in Desert Places
who

who first pronounc'd a certain *Articulate Sound*, which in the Phenician *Tongue* signify'd Bread ; but this is only look'd upon as a Fable. Infants thus Nourish'd and brought up, would do no more than Cry like such Brutes, as they had heard.

These Men then destitute of Speech, and never hearing any *Articulate Sound* for their Imitation, would do nothing but Cry ; and that they would always do, but would never attain to the formation of an *Articulate* or Determin'd Word, to express their Thoughts or Desires by. But now, what Cry or Sound is it, that above all others should be made Choice of to signify such or such a thing ? and who could persuade, or oblige Others to employ this or that Man's Sound to Signify this or that thing, rather than the Sound of any other Person ? We must, before that can be done, suppose an Agreement between these Speechless Men, whereby they all consent to acquiesce in one particular Man's Device in giving Names to all Ideas and Things, and to use all the same Names and Words, which that particular Man had invented. Without such an Agreement, there would be as many *Tongues* as Men: That is to say, there would properly be no *Tongue* at all, since Men, in this State, could have no Common Terms to express their Minds to one another, as I have said in the foregoing Chapter.

All these Reasons may suffice to make us comprehend, how slender an Appearance of Truth there is in the Conjectures of these Philosophers about the Origin of *Tongues*. And so *Lactantius* says, that reasonable Men can never imagine that

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there can be found such a thing, as an Assembly, of Speechless Men. * *Nulla igitur in principio facta est ejusmodi Congregatio, nec Nunquam fuisse homines in terra, nisi qui propter Infantiam non Loquerentur, intelliget, cui ratio non deest.*

Plato † indeed proposes a Way how Men might be brought to express themselves, even supposing them to be born Speechless; but at last abandons his own Conjectures, because he perceiv'd, that tho' Men might attain to make themselves understood to each other in familiar and sensible things, it would nevertheless be impossible for them to do it, in regard of such Ideas as were purely Spiritual and Intellectual. And in fine (to cut off all Difficulties about the Institution of Languages) he has recourse to the Divine Power, since all other Notions of the Origin of Tongues, has neither Reason nor Appearance of Truth, any more than those of the Origin of Men.

* *De vero Cultu. Cap. 10.*

† *In Cratyl.*

of LANGUAGES. 19

CHAP. IV.

That the Origin of Tongues is owing to God alone.



He, who enjoy the Blessings of the True Religion, by the Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, have no need to make painful and tedious Enquiries to find out the Origin of Languages; being well assur'd, that God created Man with all the Perfections which belong to Human Nature; and consequently that he received from him the Gift of Speech, and even Words themselves from the very Moment of his Creation. For if we have no Reason to doubt but that Man was Created for Society, and at the same time know, that Speech is the first and most necessary Band of that Society, we cannot but think that he must have had the Faculty of Speaking from the Moment of his Formation.

For if he was endow'd with all the Knowledge which Human Nature is capable of, which Knowledge, according to * *St. Augustin*, was such, as surpass'd that of the most refin'd Genius among us, as much as the Towering Flight of the Eagle surpasses the slow Pace of the Tortoise; it would have been a great Imperfection in him, if he could not have spoke of all that he knew, and if he could not have explain'd himself upon all that occur'd to his Mind, as soon as the Hand of God had finish'd him. But now if he was not created with such a Faculty, he must have employ'd much Time

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* *Contra Pelag.*

hard Labour, and great Application to compose himself a Speech; all which would have been equally unworthy the Wisdom and Justice of his Creator : Unworthy his Wisdom, in making Man Defective, and unworthy his Justice too, in Condemning him to a Punishment, which as yet he had not deserved.

Those who are not of this Opinion (to give it a Ridiculous Turn) pretend, that in this Manner, we only make of God Almighty a School Master or Grammarian, that teaches Men Languages : But they, by this Suggestion, do only shew, that they have very gross Conceptions of the Wisdom and Power of God. God has no Need to stoop to the Ordinary Ways of Men to teach them whatever he would have them know ; he does it by Methods worthy of himself ; and in this Method it was that he taught the first Man the first *Language*.

Man did think as soon as he was created ; for what kind of Man could he be, that did not think ? And as soon as he thought, he had a desire to speak ; since being made for Society, he could have no Thoughts but what he was willing to communicate. For which Reason, as soon as he thought, his Thoughts were follow'd by certain Strokes of the Imagination proper to give a Body to his Thoughts, and with a certain Disposition in the Organs of the Voice proper to produce such Sounds, as were requisite to express them in such Manner, that all his Thoughts, through the whole Course of his Life, were cloathed with all the Images, and all the Expressions necessary to make them Conceivable to others, with the same clearness and distinctness, as he himself conceived them. All
which

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which was done by the Direction of God, and by a necessary Consequence of his wise Design in the Formation of Man.

But because speaking alone is not sufficient to enable Man to Compose a *Tongue* (it being necessary likewise that Others should understand and comprehend what he says) God so ordain'd it, that at the same time, when the first Man should speak, describing certain Things, and expressing certain Ideas, his Wife and Children (when he should have them) should hear him speak, and at that time have in their Understandings the same Ideas, in their Brains the same Images, and in the Organs of their Voice the same Dispositions to pronounce the same Sounds ; by which Means they shou'd come to understand his Thoughts, and to speak and answer him *A propos*. And all this as I have said, was accomplished by the Laws of God's Wisdom, for the Execution of his Designs, in order to adorn Man with all the Perfections due to his Nature.

If any one should Cavil at what I have said, viz. *that Man could have no Thought but what he would be willing to communicate* ; I shall sufficiently answer him by saying, in the first Place, that such a Desire is what we Our selves do constantly feel within Our selves ; Secondly, that tho' a sinful Man ought to conceal many of his Thoughts for his own Honour, and that of other People, yet an Innocent Man could have none, but what deserv'd to be known ; and Thirdly, as Man is a Being, compos'd of Soul and Body, he ought also to have a Power to give a Body to all his Thoughts, and to have the faculty of Speaking, the certain Result of his

his Nature. In short, Man being born for Society, ought always to be in a State of supporting it, since the strongest and most lasting Tyes thereof consist in a Communication of our Thoughts.

'Tis this, which makes it so difficult for a Man to keep Secrets, or live in Solitude. *Cicero* somewhere in his *Offices* says, that tho' Man were ever so plentifully provided with all the Necessaries of Life, yet he would not be contented with Contemplation only, but would strive and endeavour to speak; *Socium sui Studij quærens, tum docere, tum discere vellet; tum audire tum dicere*. So true it is that Nature, without Speech, would be of no use to form Society, and that there is nothing which separates Mankind more than the Diversity of *Tongues*, as, says *St. Augustine* in his Book, *de civitate Dei*. If Two Men, who could not understand each other (says the same Father) should meet, and be obliged to live together, Two Brutes, even of different Species, would better associate themselves than those two strange Men, notwithstanding the Natural resemblance between them; and a Man would rather chuse the Company of his Dog, than that of a Man, whose *Tongue* he could not understand. In a Word, 'tis the Diversity of *Tongues* that renders Men *Barbarous* to one another, and incapable of giving mutual Assistance; whereas 'tis Nature, the Love of Society, and the Sense of our Necessities, that produces in Man an Incessant Desire of Speaking.

This then is the manner wherein the first *Tongue* was form'd. All the Thoughts of *Adam* were join'd to certain Sounds to signify them, and those Sounds represented the same Thoughts,

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Thoughts, which he had, when he form'd them, to the Understandings of those, that heard him. He first gave Names to all Living Creatures; in the Course of his Life, he entertained himself with the Conversation of his Wife, his Children, and his Grand-Children; and thus speaking to them of all Things, and of all the Arts and Sciences, whereof he received as full a knowledge from God as Man was capable, the Words which made up their Conversation, compos'd the first *Tongue*; for the Ideas of Thoughts and Things were affix'd to Words, and ever afterwards represented themselves along with them to the Understanding and Imagination. This, if I mistake not, was that Mechanick way whereby the *Tongue* of *Adam* was form'd. Nor can I think the Origin of *Tongues*, can any where else be found, without giving birth to Chimeras.

It was God then alone who was truly the Author of the first *Tongue*, as well as the first Man. We observ'd that *Plato* perceiv'd the necessity of running back to the Principal of all Beings to find out the Principle and Origin of *Tongues*. *Quintillian* perceiv'd the same, For, *who doubts*, says this great Rhetorician, * *but that Man received Speech from him who gave him Being, and even as soon as he received that Being?* *Nam cui dubium est quin Sermonem ab ipsa rerum Natura geniti protinus homines acceperint?*

The Union of Ideas purely Spiritual and Intellectual with corporal and sensible Sounds, is no small Mystery; or how it comes to pass, that such a Sound should, at first touch, excite in the Soul such or such a Thought. These

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Things

* *Lib. 3, Cap. 2.*

Things astonish'd *Plato*, * and as great a Philosopher as he was, he wou'd not undertake to penetrate them ; He only says that we do not know these Ideas by their Sounds, but by themselves. We are assured however of the Truth of this union by continu'd Experience, and we are assur'd by Reason, that it is God himself who made this union, since no other Power could do it.

Here then, I think we ought to bound all our Curiosity in Relation to the Origin of *Tongues*. Not only the first came immediately from God, but also all those, which were form'd at the Tower of *Babel*, as we shall see in the sequel.

By this History of the Origin of *Tongues*, or (if some will deny it that Title) by these Conjectures, which I call reasonable, (since they are grounded upon our Idea of the Wisdom of God, and the order of Things, since *Pagans* have had them as well as we, and the most knowing Men in these matters have had no other.) By this History, I say, or these Conjectures, it may be seen what small part Human Prudence could have in the Establishent of *Tongues*. For if the first *Tongue* was not the Result of it, the other and subsequent ones were much less so.

When the first Men spoke, they express'd their Words without Choice or Deliberation, without premeditating or contriving them ; not unlike the Cries, which Pain, or some other Passion extorts from the Mouth of Animals : And in this respect, these Words were natural Signs. But be-
cause

* In *Cratylus*,

of LANGUAGES. 25

cause Words in themselves are indifferent to what signification they are applied, and because God, who fram'd the Organs of these Men, might have made them pronounce other Words, to signify the same Things; therefore these words are, in this respect, Arbitrary Signs, which by themselves have no signification but by the Institution of some free and rational Agent.

We may properly say then, that Words are neither Natural, nor Arbitrary Signs, (to take the Words *Natural* and *Arbitrary* in their strict Sense) but that they have something of both. And the same may be said of whatever regards the Analogy of *Tongues*, the Inflection of *Nouns* and *Verbs*, their Pronunciations and Terminations; for all these things might have been turn'd quite otherwise, since it was not by any deliberation of the Will, that they came to be turn'd as they are. *I have Loved*, for instance, might have signify'd that, which is intended by, *I shall Love*; and what denotes the *Masculine*, might have as well denoted the *Feminine Gender*, &c. because in this Case Man did, without any reflection, determine, that one should denote the *Time past*, the other the *Time to come*, and that such an Article should demonstrate the *Masculine* and such another the *Feminine Gender*: All which is the pure effect of certain conjunction of Causes, that Human Wisdom has no way directed.

We must except however certain General Rules, which can never change, because they are absolutely grounded upon Nature; Such as the Rules for the Construction of *Nouns* with *Verbs*, and the *Nouns* with one another. Because without these Rules, Conversation would signify

signify nothing ; For Words being the Expression of Thoughts, and Thoughts consisting in the Union or Separation of certain Ideas ; those Ideas shou'd appear either united or separated in Discourse, otherwise they cannot represent our Thoughts. The *Position* of Words may be comprehended under these Rules, for it is no way indifferent to place them as we will.

All the Rules then, which regard the Order of our Ideas, are so Essential to Discourse, that they are found necessary in all *Tongues* : they depend not on the Caprice or Fancy of Men, but are as Natural to a Language, as it is for Fire to produce Smoke. And in this manner may be reconcil'd the different Opinions which Men have had of Language. It depends on Nature in those Rules which cannot change, according to the Philosopher *Hermogenes* in *Plato* ; and so according to the Stoicks 'tis Natural : And it depends on the fancy of Men, in things which do change ; And so, according to the Philosopher *Cratylus* in *Plato*, and according to *Arnobius*, and the whole Croud of Gramunarians, it is Arbitrary : And this is the distinction, whereon I ground my Opinion.

CHAP. V.

Of the Perfection of the first Tongue.

IT may not perhaps in this place be amiss to treat of the Perfection of the first *Tongue*; since we may the better know thereby, wherein the perfection of others consists; and since the Arguments on this Subject have hitherto been so very imaginary and uncertain.

I for my part am of Opinion, that we need not doubt, but that the first *Tongue* had, from its very Origin, all the Beauties whereof *Tongues* are capable. For as *Adam* wanted no one perfection which his Nature cou'd require, having as full a knowledge of all Arts and Sciences, and that in as exalted a degree, as Man cou'd possess: So we may rest satisfy'd that the *Tongue*, which he spoke, was no way deficient. That is to say, that as *Adam* could talk upon all sorts of Subjects with all possible Eloquence, we ought to believe that the *Tongue*, he spake, could furnish him with all sorts of Terms, that were necessary to express himself with such Eloquence.

He could have us'd all sorts of Stiles, and I need not scruple to say, but, that he did use them. For can we make any doubt, but that he Instructed his Children, first, in all things they were to do, or in what he thought necessary for them to know, in order to Merit the Protection of God; after that in all Arts and Sciences: And in a word, in all that he knew, of what was either past, present, or to come? Can we doubt, but that he endeavour'd to render all that he said

said agreeable to them? Or that he did not employ all the Force, Strength, and Sublimity of his Language, to make them comprehend the Great and Terrible Truths, which he taught them? The bare Quality of a Father, may suffice to assure us of this; Paternal Tenderness could not fail of giving sufficient Instructions, and this was so much greater in the first Man, as he was the Cause of the Misery of his Children, and therefore the Sentiments of Nature prompted him to teach them all the necessary Methods to mollify and diminish that Misery, which he brought upon them.

And what Man ever had such Subjects for the *great* or *sublime*? The Creation of the Universe, his own Formation by God's Hand, his Happiness in the state of Innocence, his Condemnation, his Fall, and in *his*, that of all Human Race; the Severities of God's Justice in the Condemnation of the Wicked, the effects of his Compassion in his Redemption of Human kind, and of the Felicity of his Elect to Eternity; What can be found comparable to these things in all the Writings of Prophane Authors? And who, besides himself, could have spoke with so feeling a Sense of them as he, who had, by his Crime, so great a share in the one, and was the first that by Grace received the Revelation of the other? If *Quintilian* said nothing was more just, than that we shou'd teach others, what we ourselves know, *Adam* had yet much stronger Obligations: For what he ow'd to God, what to his Children, and what to all Mankind, obliged him to teach them all that he had learn'd of God, and to engage them, by the most powerful Arguments,

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Arguments, to a Belief and Practice of all the Truths, whereof he inform'd them. *Quid honestius quam docere, quod optime scias?* Is there not then, reason to believe, that the *Tongue* which he spoke was as rich and eloquent as a *Tongue* could be?

'Tis a probable Conjecture of some Learned Men, that *Hebrew* was in its highest perfection in the Times of *David* and *Solomon*. Their Opinions may be True, if we understand them, with regard to what this *Tongue* was after the Time of *Adam*. (For I suppose, as there is great reason to believe, notwithstanding the Conjectures of some Moderns, that *Hebrew* was the *Tongue*, which *Adam* spake) yet I am persuaded, that this *Tongue* was much fallen away from its first perfection by the barbarity of Men, who, taken up with their Necessities, and transported by their Passions, neglected almost all the Arts and Sciences; and by this Negligence lost the most exquisite Beauties and Perfections of their *Tongue*. In a word, their *Tongue* became as barbarous as their Manners; but it began to retrieve a part of what it lost, when the People of God began to live in regular Society: And there is a great probability, that in the times of *David* and *Solomon*, when that People was in its greatest prosperity, the *Tongue* was also in the greatest splendor it had, since its first decay. Tho' I cannot believe that it recover'd, in those Times, all the richness which it had in its Origin, unless we will have it, that *Solomon* had all the Knowledge of *Adam*, which I cannot believe, and which there is not room to believe, though the Scriptures attribute so great an abundance to him.

Some

Some have thought that the *Hebrew* once had so great an Energy, that Names express'd the Nature of Things, and were like so many abridg'd Definitions; Inſomuch, that, according to their Opinion, it was only requir'd to underſtand that *Tongue* well, and become a moſt excellent Philoſopher. But here I think they ſtretch its excellence a little too far; and attribute to it, what no *Tongue* can have. For I cannot comprehend that one ſimple Word ſhou'd expreſs the Nature of a Thing, otherwiſe than by reaſon of the accidental Union of the Idea of that Thing to that Word. For if it were ſo, the Words which conſtitute that *Tongue*, wou'd be ſo many Natural Signs, and have a neceſſary Connexion with the Thing it ſelf, which we cannot ſee to be any way poſſible.

If there are in this *Tongue* ſome Terms which ſignify things by themſelves, they are compos'd for that purpoſe, as thoſe of *Adam* and of *Eve*, and other like Terms; but ſimple Terms, which make up the Composition of others, ſignify nothing of themſelves, and are indifferent to all ſorts of ſignifications: If the Name *Adam* ſignifies *made of Earth*, and *Eve* the *Mother of all Living*, 'tis becauſe the one is compos'd of the Word which ſignifies *Earth*, and the other of that which ſignifies *Mother* and *Living*; but the Words which ſignify *Earth*, *Mother* and *Living*, might ſignify quite another thing, or any other ſorts of Sound might have been employ'd to ſignify theſe ſame things.

There is no *Tongue* but has a great Number of *Compound* Names, to ſignify certain Things, certain Trades, and certain Employments by, each
of

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of us may every where find Examples of this kind: But we must know, at the same time, that *simple Words*, which are as the Elements of the *Compound*, have not in themselves any value but what is given to them; nor do the *Compounds* naturally represent the Idea of Things they signify, but to those only, who by their knowledge in the Language, understand the *Primitives*.

'Tis of these *Compound Names* alone, it may be said, that, if we know them, we know the things (as *Plato*, * says, in his Dialogue of the reason of Names) for *Simple Names* cannot be known, unless the things be known before hand, as the same Philosopher says again, which thing we cannot too much remark: So that *Compound Names* make known the Things, and the Things make known the *simple Names*.

It is said in Scripture, that every Creature bore the Name which *Adam* gave it, *Gen. 2. 19*. But this does not in the least signify that the Name express'd its Nature; and those that understand this Passage in this Sense, would, in my Opinion, find in it a meaning which it no wise has. Possibly their prepossession may be grounded upon what some Philosophers (as *Plato* in the aforementioned Book, and *Pythagoras*, as *Cicero* reports) have thought, *viz.* that the Imposition of Names was the work of a Sovereign Wisdom. Upon this Foundation Christian Philosophers have thought that God, who certainly is the Sovereign Wisdom, inspir'd *Adam* with Names, which carry'd in them the imprinted Notion of Things, and perfectly describ'd their

* In *Cratylus*.

their Nature; because God who knew perfectly their Nature, cou'd not have fail'd to inspire *Adam* with such Names as he thought proper. This is what the *Hebrews* think, or, to speak more properly, the *Caballists* and *Rabbins*. But I confess, I have not Sense enough to comprehend this Thought; nor can I see any other reason for the signification of Names, than the will of him who impos'd them, I mean *simple* Names; if there is any other, 'tis a Mystery which human understanding cannot Penetrate.

Criticks indeed produce many Examples to shew that the first Names of Animals signify'd in themselves their Nature. According to them, Beasts are called *Brutes*, because they are stupid and cannot speak, *Bruta à silentio & stupore*; the Camel is so call'd, because he is vindictive, *Camelus à rependendo, quod est injuriarum memor*; The Hawk takes its Name from the subtilty of its Eye-sight; The Pelican, from its vomiting the Nourishment which it takes; *Milvus à visu acutissimo*, *Pelicanus à vomitu*, and so of the rest, as may be found among the Criticks.

But these Examples prove nothing against what I say; for tho' it should be true, that these Compound Names, should in effect signify, what those Criticks would have them, which cannot be much ascertain'd; yet still they would so signify, upon the pure Score of their Composition; and to understand them, it would be necessary to find out the signification of the simple words which compos'd them. But since it is plain that those simple words signify in themselves, neither *silence*, nor *stupidity*, nor *vengeance*, nor *vomiting*, nor *subtile sight*; Then that which ought

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ought to be prov'd is to demonstrate, that the Terms of the first *Tongue* do in themselves signify the Nature of Things.

Even the ineffable Name of God, as compos'd of so many Letters, signifies nothing, but by the force of its Composition; and there is no *Tongue*, wherein as much may not be done. Had God been pleas'd to Inspire *Adam* with the Language we speak, he might have given himself, in *French*, a Name answerable to that which he call'd himself in *Hebrew*; and the like may be said of all other impos'd Names.

If the Names, which I have been mentioning, did in reality signify what the Criticks pretend, *Adam*, by imposing them, has intimated something of the Nature of those Animals.

I say something (for the bare knowledge of what those Names Import is not to be accounted so great an acquisition) but it is more likely that Criticks have found out such significations in these *Hebrew* Names, merely because they had the knowledge of the Things themselves elsewhere; For if we have any certainty of the signification of *Hebrew* Names, it is only of such, as the Scripture it self explains to us.

The signification of Words cannot be better comprehended than by the manner of computing Figures: These Figures, 1, 2, 3, do not in themselves denote either, One, Two, or Three, but only because the will of Man wou'd have it so. But then, supposing that Men had been willing that their amount shou'd be Ten times more, at every Station they advance from the Right to the Left, then these

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Three Figures, 1, 2, 3, join'd together, would necessarily come to One hundred and Twenty three. This is *Plato's* Comparifon; who after he had thoroughly examin'd for the Reason of Names, in his *Cratylus*, was at laft constrain'd to fit down with this perfuafion, that they are no otherways to be accounted for, than Figures.

It may be faid that God (who, according to what I have advanc'd, was in reality the Author of the fift *Tongue*, and being incapable of doing any thing but by his Sovereign Wifdom) wanted not power to impart Names and their Reason along with them: And this is what *Plato* fays in the Dialogues fo often cited, *viz.* That to cut fhort the many Difficulties, about the Imposition of Names, we muft have recourfe to Divinity, and fay, that Names were wifely given, becaufe given by the Gods.

I acknowledge that the Sovereign Wifdom, which prefides in all the Works of God, did alfo prefide in the *Tongue*, wherewith he inspir'd *Adam*; but the Reafons, which he had to Infpire him with that *Tongue*, rather than another, cannot be known to us; and 'tis a great Temerity, and unprofitable amufement to fearch into it, as the *Caballifts* do, who attribute the Miracles of *Mofes* and the *Prophets* to the Efficacy of certain Names in it. 'Tis apparently in conformity to the Sentiments of the Cabal, whereof *Plato* was not Ignorant, that he endeavours, in his *Cratylus*, to difcover the Natural reafons of Names; at leaft it may be fuppos'd that he did not feek for the Etymology of the Names of the Heroes and Gods, whereof *Homer* makes fuch mention, but to imitate *Mofes*,
who

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who gives Reasons for the Names of almost all the Men, whose Geneology he has wrote.

But without ascribing to this *Tongue* an Energy, which it never had, and which I apprehend no other *Tongue* ever could have, there is still no reason to say, but it had all the Force, all the Richness, and, in a word, all the Excellence whereof a *Tongue* is capable, and that even from its first beginning: And in this it differs from all other *Tongues*, which do not arrive to their Perfection, but by long use, and the study of Arts and Sciences.

Some Men are of Opinion that this *Tongue* is Barren, but their allegations are without reason. The Truth is, as we have but one Book in this *Tongue*, and that wrote with no other Design, than to render us knowing in our Religion, and to Edify us in Piety; this Book can preserve but a very small part of the Terms and manner of Diction us'd in that *Tongue*, and consequently, cannot acquaint us with all the Excellence and Richness of it. But it cannot therefore be said to be barren, because all its Beauties and Perfections are not known to us.

Even the Criticks themselves, with all their Penetration and Study, know it only by means of this one Book; and by what knowledge they acquire therein, they cannot conclude with any certainty what this *Language* originally was in it self. For Example, if in this Book we find a great confusion of *Tenses* in the *Verbs*, we cannot reasonably conclude that it was the same thing in ordinary Discourse, or in such other Books, as were wrote in that *Tongue*, as those of the Books of the *Chronicles*, and of the Reigns of the Kings of *Israel* and *Judah*. For

by what method could Men have understood each other, if they had express'd the *time past* like the *present* or the *future*, and if they had indifferently used all the *Tenses* alike? If things are thus in the Scripture, 'tis because the Book is Prophetick, and the Style thereof so peculiar to it self, that it can no way be accommodated to any other. It may be judg'd by this Reflection, whether we may, with any shew of Reason, boast of our knowledge in the *Hebrew Tongue*, or discourse pertinently of its Nature by such Notions, as the Scriptures furnish us with.

But, in fine, let us except this *Tongue* from the common Rules, since God has been pleas'd to use it for Designs, wherein he did not think fit to employ others. It is all Divine in its Origin, all Mysterious, and all Prophetick in its end: And we shou'd therefore think it to be above the Spirit, Force, and Grandure of all other *Tongues*; nor must we use whatsoever we find Extraordinary and Supernatural in this *Tongue* as rules to reason upon the rest.

Thus have we shewn that the first *Tongue* was given by * God. Let us now see how all the rest came from the first, whether the Modern ones are Derivatives, as some assert, or Originals, as some other Learned Men believe.

* Vulat. 1. Proleg. Them. de l' Origine des Langues.

CHAP. VI.

Of the Multiplication of Tongues, and their Changes.



BEFORE the building of the Tower of *Babel*, all Mankind spoke but one *Tongue*, and that was the first which was spoke: Nor can we doubt but that, had they not sined, they would have spoke but that *Tongue* alone, because at that time, they being perfectly united to God, and among themselves, would, in effect, but have compos'd one Family; and it was for no other end, but to punish their Pride and Disobedience, that God made them Barbarous to one another, by confounding their *Language*; that is to say, by multiplying their *Tongues*, in such sort, that they could not understand one another.

We must not however believe that each Man spoke a particular *Language*, the Number being ordinarily fix'd to Seventy two; and which was much about the Number of the principal Families, which, at that time, compos'd the whole Race of Mankind; Inasmuch, that each Family began to have its particular *Tongue*. But in regard to this Number, every one may follow his own Conjecture. It was however the diversity of *Languages* which hinder'd those Men from continuing their haughty Design, and obliged them to separate, and go to inhabit different Countries: And from this Dispersion of theirs the World became peopled.

It was then at the Tower of *Babel* that Men became barbarous, that is to say, Strangers and unacquainted with one another's Language, and also incapable of Mutual Assistance and Intelligence, as the Apostle in these Words shews us, (1. Cor. 14 2.) *Therefore if I know not the Meaning of the Voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a Barbarian; and he that speaketh shall be a Barbarian unto me.* And God threatening his People with a hard and tedious Captivity, (Deut. 28.) tells them *that he will make them Slaves to a People, whose Language they shall not understand.* For 'tis the Difference of Languages which render Men barbarous to one another, as I have shewn above.

But we must now examine how these new Tongues came to be form'd: My Sentiments are, that God dispos'd the Organs of Men at that time in such a Manner, that when they endeavour'd to pronounce those Words which they were accusom'd to before, the Words differ'd so very much from their usual Pronunciation, that they did not in the least denote the Things they intended to utter; so that those, whose Language God was pleas'd to change, did in the Articulation of their Voice, form Words entirely new, and contrary to their ancient *Tongue*. And thus continuing to articulate their Voices in a new and unheard of manner each time they spake, they, at last, made themselves a new *Tongue*: For all their Ideas became joyn'd to the Terms of this new *Tongue*, instead of being joyn'd to the Terms of *that* which they spoke before. And there is room to believe, that they so far forgot their ancient *Tongue*, as not to remember that ever they had spoke it, nor did they perceive the

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the Change any other way, but that they did not understand one another as usual.

Thus I conceive this Change was brought about. And supposing the Power of God over all his Creatures, I do not herein see any extraordinary Mystery, nor why the *Rabbies* * so much tormented themselves to find out the Cause of this Change, nor, in short, that there is any Necessity to have recourse to Faith, as some Divines pretend; unless they will have it, that we can, no otherwise than by Faith, know the Almighty Power of the Creator over his Creature.

As the *Tongue* which was first Spoke, came immediately from God, so did all *those*, which were form'd at the Confusion of *Babel*; since it was God himself who form'd them and all their Terms, by a special Direction of the Organs of the Voice of those Men. But may we not say that all these new *Tongues* depended upon the First, as the *Italian*, *Spanish*, *French*, and *English* depend on the *Latin*? Some believe it, and have undertaken to shew, that all *Tongues* are deriv'd from the *Hebrew*; and it must be own'd that their Reasons have a very great probability. But this Question is of no Importance to my Subject; 'tis enough for my Purpose that those new *Tongues* were the Work of God, and not the Effect of human Prudence.

But if this Confusion of *Tongues* was only the Punishment of those, who were guilty of the insolent Attempt in the Tower of *Babel*, if any then were innocent, the *Language* of all was not confounded. And many of the Fathers

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* *Unalt. 1, in leg. 7.*

and Interpreters are of Opinion that the ancient *Tongue* was preserv'd in the Family of *Heber*, who did not, like the rest, conspire in this rash and impious Undertaking; so that the first *Tongue*, which till then had no Name, did now begin to take that of *Heber*, in order to distinguish it from the rest, and 'twas only he whose Family retain'd it: But tho' this Etymology be sorely contested, yet the best Criticks find it the most likely to be true.

When *Tongues* were once thus multiply'd miraculously, they did not long rest in their first Multiplication; but went on, as it were naturally to multiply into so many, that we can now neither know nor count the Number of them.

The first Division of *Tongues*, occasion'd the first Division of Mankind; and in its Turn, this first Division of Mankind was the Cause of the Division of *Tongues*; because as Men daily divided themselves more and more, so did their *Language* also. If at first there were but 72 Families, which made 72 Tribes or Collonies, how many Collonies have they multiply'd and divided themselves into since that time by new Divisions and Subdivisions, and how many divided Collonies have united themselves, and after that divided themselves again?

But they did not only divide themselves; they even changed their former into new *Tongues*, and entirely lost the old. Many Causes were productive of these Changes: The first was the Change of Climate; for the Temperature of the Air, influencing the Constitution of Men, and consequently making a Change in the Organs of the Voice and of the Hearing, must necessarily cause a Change in the Pronunciation of Letters and
Words,

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Words, as well as the Terminations ; and those Changes of the Pronunciation and Termination at last produc'd that of the *Tongue* entirely. Thus the first Colonies being divided into others, who went and sojourn'd into different Climates and distant Countries, changed their old *Tongues* by little and little into new Ones ; for the Change or Transposition of Letters will, in process of time, cause also a Change in *Languages*.

A Second Cause of the Change of *Tongues*, is a Mixture, which those divided People made, whether by the Conquests they obtain'd over one another, or by their Transmigrations, and Commerce : Thus from the ancient *Tongue*, so mix'd and confounded, these People compos'd themselves divers new ones. And in the same manner it will constantly happen from the strong propensity Men have to imitate one another ; and in order to unite themselves, they will use each others *Tongues* insensibly, without so much as making any Reflection.

A Third Cause of this Change, is the Inconstancy of Man. It might be thought that a *Tongue* should always be the same in a State, which, for a long Series of time, keeps itself free from the Mixture of any other Nation : Yet we see by daily Experience, that Words and Expressions grow obsolete, that others insensibly take place, and that the Tyranny of the Mode carries a Sway as well in *Languages*, as in Cloaths and Furniture. The Complaisance which Men have for one another, and their strange Love of Novelty, changes an ancient *Tongue* insensibly I say, and gives Birth to another quite different, tho' frequently call'd by the old Name. As we at present spake a *Tongue* that is quite another thing

thing to that which was spoken Three or Four Hundred Years ago, notwithstanding which, we still call it *French*.

Thus all the first *Tongues* almost entirely lost themselves in new Ones; and tho', by the Secret of Etymologick Art, we find means to shew a resemblance between the *New* and the *Old* in many things; yet the resemblance is so very weak and inconsiderable, that if a *Frenchman* who dy'd Three Hundred Years ago, should now come to Life again, we should not, at this time, understand one another.

These Changes are the necessary Effects of Inconstancy, in Men, of the transitory things of this World, of People, and of Empires, and nothing can prevent them. Nor can the Mutability of these things be any way withstood by the strongest Efforts, which the most Learned and prudent Men of any Age are able to make.

Dictionaries themselves cannot redress this Evil: They may indeed transmit to Posterity a good part of the Knowledge of our present *Language*, but they cannot hinder it from feeling the Impression of Time, from growing old, and at last from giving way to some other. In short, is it not enough that Living *Tongues* depend on Custom to be assur'd that nothing can prevent their Change, since it is so certain, that Custom is nothing else but one perpetual Change?

When we arrive at such a Point of Perfection, as to acquire what we call *Simple* and *Natural*, we grow weary, as in Fashions: What we first sought in Perukes was *Commodious* and *Natural*, but we were no sooner arriv'd to that, than we wanted what was *vain* and *luxuriant*, which carry'd us far from what was *Commodious* and *Natural*.

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ral. This is what Man does in every thing, and what will always happen in Living *Languages*.

The late Mr. *Menage* said, that he had study'd his *Tongue* for Fifty Years, and yet did not know it; it was because he saw it change, and whatever is Mutable is not indeed a Matter of Science; for that which we once knew, being no more what it was, our Knowledge of it vanishes with it.

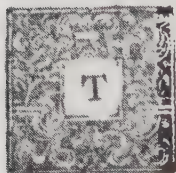
These Changes happen'd even, in part, to the first *Tongue*. For I cannot believe, that the *Hebrew*, in the time of *Moses*, was entirely the same with what it was in the time of *Adam*, or even of the Patriarchs *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*; because (without speaking of what it had lost of its Abundance) there was much time elapsed since its Birth, and it had pass'd into too many different Climates, and mix'd among too many different Nations, not to have suffer'd some part of the Changes, which accrew to all other Things.

Some will tell us that the *Chinese Tongue* was a considerable time without changing, but this is very difficult to be credited. The *Chinese* are Men, and consequently inconstant as other Men are, since the Inconstancy of Man is the Effect of that Corruption, which infected all Mankind. But if those who would persuade us to credit this Paradox, would be pleas'd to inform us, why this *Tongue*, after having continued so long in the same State, should at last come to change; we might perhaps perceive, that the Causes of the Change being no ways new, there could be no Reason to think but they had acted before, rather than that the Vicissitude of the Things of this World had been suspended, for a time, in favour of that *Tongue*.

CHAP.

C H A P. VII.

Of the Perfection, and Decay of Tongues.



TH E Changes, whereof I have now treated, are no way influenc'd by the Prudence of Men; they are brought about by a certain Chain of Causes, ordain'd by the Providence of God for ends, which are impossible for Man to penetrate. But there are others which properly are the Works of Man's Abilities and great Industry, and these are the Changes which are made in the Amendment and Advancement of *them* towards Perfection. 'Tis thus the *Greeks* and *Romans* chang'd their *Tongues*, by enriching *them* with many Terms, by polishing their Construction, and ennobling *them* with many figurative, Sublime, and Magnificent Expressions, and in fine, by forming them Stiles proper for all sorts of Subjects; for 'tis by Sciences, and the knowledge of Arts, that *Tongues*, are embellish'd. Thus perhaps the *Chaldeans*, and *Egyptians* first did in their *Tongues* what the *Greeks* and *Romans* afterward did in *Latin* and *Greek*; and there is reason enough to believe it, since the former so very much cultivated Arts and Sciences, that it was from them that the *Grecians* went to seek *them*. But little or nothing of those *Tongues* remaining now with us, we cannot talk of them but by Conjecture.

The *Jews* I believe cannot pretend to much on this account; they very little cultivated any Sciences, and were too much taken up with the
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Ceremonies of their Religion. This was a weight that crush'd and sunk the grosser sort of them, and depriv'd them even of leisure to think of any thing else; and all their Men of Wit and best Parts neglected, nay even despis'd all Sciences, addicting themselves wholly to the Spiritual Sense hid under the Letter of the Law, and to the hopes and expectance of a Messiah, without so much as talking of the Necessaries of Life.

In effect then, it is no other way, than by improvement that *Tongues* attain their perfection, and the People, which advance them to this perfection, must consequently grow Civil and Polite, wherunto the knowledge of the Arts and Sciences do very much contribute: For the more they advance their Knowledge, the more their *Language* will become enrich'd; since the discoveries of new Matters and new Truths, must in proportion multiply Terms necessary to express them. For the greatness and excellence of Things is necessarily follow'd by that of *Language*, without much Application or Labour.

But now *Arts* and *Sciences* flourish no where so well as in settl'd and establish'd Governments, whose People live in regular Society, in the long enjoyment of undisturb'd Peace, and, by wholesome Laws, secur'd from the violence of other States; and provided with all the Necessaries of Life. For study is the proper Province of a People uninterrupted by the necessity of defending themselves, and undisquieted by the trouble of seeking Succors elsewhere. * *Eloquence* (says Cicero)

* *De claris Orat.*

Cicero) is the Companion of Leisure and Tranquility, and the fruit of a Solidly-establish'd Government: For which reason we must expect, neither much Eloquence, nor many Sciences, amongst such Nations, as are always in War, and who cannot live but by the Spoil of their Neighbours. But whensoever we see a People in the full enjoyment of Peace, and of all things needful to Human Life, then shall we see the Spirit of Curiosity begin to exert it self, and making researches into the Arts and Sciences, be it merely for its own Entertainment, or to entertain others. * No sooner are we free, and unburthen'd from the knotty Cares, and intricate Affairs of ordinary Life (*says Cicero*) but we endeavour to See, and Learn, and Understand something New.

Thus all the Advances, which Men make in Sciences, arise at first from the Natural Inclination they have to attain Knowledge; whether they come to the Knowledge of the Principles thereof by Reflection and Meditation in themselves, or receive them by tradition from their Fathers: Yet still they draw from these Principles, the certain Truths which they contain; and by that means raise the Edifice of Sciences, which cannot be done without Elaborate Discourses; and consequently the Language must at the same time be Embellish'd and Enrich'd with great Numbers of Terms and Expressions entirely new.

Thus the *Grecians* did, when they had acquir'd a constant and settled form of Government, wherein they felt the pleasing sweets of Peace; and they no sooner had receiv'd the Art
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* *Offic. 1.*

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of Writing, but they began to apply themselves to Study, and being perswaded that the People, who knew that Art before themselves, could not fail of first having, and knowing the Sciences, they even travel'd to *Egypt*, to *Phenicia*, to *Chaldea* and *Jerusalem*, to learn of those People whatsoever they knew. This the Histories of the first *Grecian Philosophers* do shew us, as it is also discover'd in their Principles, which do all favour of what they learn'd of the *Hebrews*.

There was from the earliest Times, amongst the *Cananites*, a City, called the City of Letters, *Cariatsepher*; and we need not doubt but that it was so call'd from its being the place where Letters were Taught, and consequently where the Sciences were cultivated; and from thence they spread themselves amongst all the neighbouring Nations.

But as Sciences did not arise to the highest degree of their Perfection all on a sudden, so Languages crept on but slowly; for the Progress of these, is, by a long Series of Years, and, as it were, insensibly brought about: So that a State must continue for a considerable time in the same quiet condition to effect it. It was the long continuance of the *Grecian* and *Roman* Government which gave time to perfect their Tongues: But when these had acquir'd all that this People were capable of doing to perfect them, they soon begun to change and decay, by the Force of the Causes above-mentioned, which contribute to the Change of Tongues, and from which no one Tongue can defend it self. The truth is, they are all effectually dead and gone; and others have taken their place in the Commerce of Life; And if at this time

we know any thing of them, 'tis only by the means of Books: *i. e.* we only know them in part, for it is no more possible for writing to preserve all the Beauties of a *Tongue*, the Sense and true Meaning of all the Words, nor the Energy and Nobleness of all the Expressions, than it is for Painting to represent all the Movements of the Mind, and Beauties of the Body. In a word, as Books do not treat of all, so neither do they preserve all the Terms, nor all the Forms of Speech necessary in a *Tongue*: We are not therefore to think, that we have as thorough Knowledge of these *Tongues*, as either had *Aristotle* or *Cicero*.

I have said, that these *Tongues* received all the Perfection and Excellence, that the *Grecians* and *Romans* were capable of giving them: Because these People were not enlightened then with many Sciences, which Men since their times have been: To mention but those of the Mysteries of our Religion, its Discipline and Morals, without speaking of many other Sciences and Arts, which we perfectly know, but were never known to them. These *Tongues* then in the most perfect State, and greatest Excellence, whereunto the *Pagans* had brought them, still wanted very many things, which they have since acquir'd, even tho' they be dead, for they have been enrich'd with many new Terms, and Forms of Speech, which neither *Aristotle* nor *Cicero* had any knowledge of.

At this time the *Greek* and *Latin* are dead *Tongues*, which are used no more in the civil commerce of Life, and only observ'd in Sciences and Religion. Such is the fate of all human Things, and of *Tongues* as well as the rest; they receive

receive Birth, Form themselves, and become perfect; and they no sooner arrive at a certain state of perfection, but they begin to decline, and go off to their end.

But tho' it be true, that Learned Men, who Cultivate the Sciences, do enrich their *Tongues* with great numbers of new Words, which they are oblig'd to introduce, in order to make them capable of expressing all that they know; yet these Learned Men do not make these Words at hap-hazard, nor draw them from their own capricious Imagination, but they borrow them from other *Tongues*, either Living or Dead, which have terms proper to express their Thoughts in, or they take them from their own *Tongue*, and gave them another signification.

It cannot be said however, that these terms are properly the Invention of Men: They do nothing in this Case, but appropriate them to their own *Tongue*, take them from a Language wherein they stood, and extend their signification beyond their common acceptation, by reason of some sort of Resemblance to things, that were unknown and undiscovered before.

In this manner, whatever the Industry or Wisdom of Man may add to *Tongues*, does not change or alter the System which I have above propos'd; viz. that *Tongues*, properly speaking, are not of human Institution; since the *new* always form themselves on the Ruins, Corruptions, Alterations, and Mixtures of the *old*; nor is any word in any *Tongue* whatsoever to be found, that is totally the Work or Invention of Man. 'Tis only Naturals and Changelings that form Sounds intirely New, and which they utter and pronounce they know not

why. But I shall have occasion to say more upon this head, when I come more particularly to treat of the manner of forming new Words to render *Tongues* more abundant.



C H A P. VIII.

*When a Tongue is arriv'd to its utmost perfection,
and when intirely lost.*



H A T has hitherto been said shews, that it is no more possible for a Nation to become Learned without polishing and enriching their *Tongue*, than for a Workman to become an expert Master in all manner of Handicraft Trades, and capable to finish all sorts of Mechanick Works, without Multiplying the Number of Tools. For in short, to become knowing, we must not only have just Ideas of Things; but we must also reason upon those Ideas, and deduce Consequences from Principles: and all this cannot be done without joining Sounds to those Ideas; Since Man, being compos'd of an Internal Soul and an External Body, cannot act with any regularity, except the Operations of both depend upon each other; for which reason we find, that when, by Meditation, he makes a Discovery of any new Truth, or new Idea, he immediately cloaths it with a sensible Sign, in order to fix it upon his Imagination, or lodge it in his Memory; without this he cou'd apply it to no purpose; it
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wou'd be but a transient glimmering, and a matter whereof he hath but small Remembrance.

There is then a necessity, that the faculty of speaking shou'd keep equal pace, with that of thinking, and that wisdom should always be accompany'd with Eloquence, as with a faithful Servant, as St. * *Augustin* saith. And *Cicero*, somewhere says, that Eloquence is nothing else but Wisdom, excelling in a Copiousness of Expression. *Eloquentia nihil est aliquid, quam Copiose Loquens sapientia*. It is hardly to be imagin'd then, that a People should make any great progress in the Knowledge of Arts and Sciences, without accustoming themselves to speak with Purity, with Elegance, with Energy, and even with much Sublimity and Magnificence. With Purity, to give Exact and Concise Ideas of such Truths as they know; with Energy, to enforce all the strength of their Thoughts; with Elegance, Sublimity, and Magnificence to make others Conceive the same Esteem and Love, which they themselves have for those Truths: And all this is nothing else but perfecting their own Tongue, and making it more Polite and Eloquent.

We may assure ourselves then, that a Tongue has attain'd the highest Degree of Perfection that Tongues are capable of, if those who speak it have discover'd, in the Arts and Sciences, all that is permitted Human Wisdom to find out. On this Account we may certainly say, that as this Extent of Knowledge was not found but in Adam alone, so his Tongue of all others was

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* De doctrin. Christi.

that which wanted no one Perfection, and among present *Tongues* that which wants the least of Perfection, must be esteem'd the most perfect. This want of Perfection however is not occasion'd in any *Tongue* by its unsuitness to receive Perfection, but is rather owing to the Knowledge of Men, which is ordinarily so limited: For there is not any one *Tongue*, but what might have serv'd *Adam* to express all his Thoughts, and to reason upon all his lofty Subjects, altogether as well as in the *Hebrew*; if God had been pleas'd that *Adam* should have spoke any other *Tongue*.

For this Reason I think it a great Rashness to pretend to assure ourselves that any *Tongue* besides the first, is, or can become to its Perfection in such Sort, as that there can be no hopes of adding any thing new to it, unless we prove that those Men, to whom such a *Tongue* is Natural, are in no Case ignorant of all that Man can know or comprehend. Now I think this cannot be said of any Nation, either *Greek* or *Roman*, nor even of the *French* themselves, who pretend to be more Learned, than the *Greeks* and *Romans* were. The most Learned Nation may still learn more, and can never arrive to a Knowledge, of all the Sciences which Human Nature is capable of.

The Growth of *Tongues* has no certain Bounds, any more than that of the Sciences. They decrease, and alter, before they are carry'd to the highest Point of their Perfection; insomuch that it may be said of them, as *Bodinus* says of Republicks, viz. that their Excellence cannot be known, till after their Declension, their Change, and their
Ruin:

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Ruin : For we could not have known, that the Language of *Augustus's* time was preferable to that which was spoken before, and to that which was spoken since, but by the Changes which the *Latin* has undergone since the times of *Augustus*.

In fine, *Tongues* do change like States, before they acquire all the Splendour they are capable of ; they decay to such a Degree, that they cease to live, and give way to others to take place in the Commerce of Life : But it is a difficult thing to know, when an Ancient *Tongue* is absolutely extinguish'd, and when a new one succeeds it ; that is to say, it is very hard to determine the Continuance or length of time which a *Tongue* has lasted, and perhaps impossible.

Tongues may be compar'd to Rivers which loose themselves in each other ; and there is only this Difference, that we precisely know where a River took its Appellation, how far it kept it, and where it lost itself and its Name together ; but we cannot do so in *Tongues*. The Ancient *French* lost itself in that which we now speak, but who can determine at what point of time our Ancestors ceas'd to speak the *Tongue* in use before what we now speak, or at what point of time they began to speak the *Tongue*, that is in present Use ?

We must first know what it is that constitutes the Essential Difference between *Tongue* and *Tongue*. They are ordinarily I know distinguish'd into *Mother*, *Primitive*, or *Original Tongues*, and into *Dialects* ; that is to say, into *Tongues* which proceed from the first, and are as it were their Daughters. Some will have it,

that the Mother *Tongues* have Essential Differences, which others want : But this Distinction is purely arbitrary, and does not give Notions sufficiently precise and clear, of the Difference of *Tongues*. To speak properly, all *Tongues* are Dialects of one only *Tongue*, which was the first, as Criticks maintain ; nor is there less reason to say that all *Tongues* are the Offspring of the first, than to say that all Men are the Issue of the first Man. In truth if God had been pleas'd to have Created any other Man besides *Adam* ; to have made him Chief of another Race of Men, and to have given him another *Tongue* different from what he gave unto *Adam*, that *Tongue* would be really Original : But as there is no Man but what is descended of *Adam*, so there is no Original *Tongue* but that which he spoke ; or those which were form'd at the Tower of *Babel*, which are now no more. For what People can now be found, who really are the Offspring of any of those Nations or Colonies, that took rise from the Confusion of *Babel*, and who have in themselves continued so firmly united, so constant in their first Settlement, so uniform in their Customs, and so reserv'd from all other Nations, that we may be assur'd they have not been subject to any of the Causes, which produce the Change of *Tongues* ?

For myself, I am of Opinion, that there is no Distinction more remarkable in *Tongues*, than when People, who speak these two *Tongues*, cannot understand one another, but must be oblig'd to study each other's *Tongue* in order to do it. For if *Tongues* are the Signs whereby the Thoughts of Men are generally communicated,

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ted, then it follows that the *Tongues*, which are known, and us'd by one, but unknown, and of no use to the other in such an Intercourse, must have Essential Differences. Naturally a *Frenchman* cannot understand an *Italian*, nor an *Italian* a *Frenchman*; therefore the *Italian* and *French Tongues* do Essentially differ. I believe the Differences of *Tongues* cannot be remark'd by Notions more clear or precise: The Distinction of *Mother Tongues* and *Dialects* is of no certainty, neither is there any *Mother Tongue* so pure, but what has taken into it a great deal of other *Tongues*. *Hebrew* indeed is the only *Tongue* we find without any Mixture, which is a great Argument both of its Antiquity and Pre-eminence; but if all other *Tongues* are mix'd, why do People give them the Title of *Mother Tongues*?

It may be said perhaps that these *Tongues* are less mix'd, than those which we call *Dialects*, and that they have such a peculiar Fund in themselves, that they do not derive from any other; whereas the *Dialects* have elsewhere taken a great part of what they are. But it may be reply'd, that it is hard knowing how much they are mix'd; since we cannot know them sufficiently to discern what is proper to themselves, and what they have borrow'd from others. This escapes all the Learned; tho' their Eru- dition be never so profound, and the Pen- etration of their Genius be never so great, yet they will never arrive to a certainty in the Choice, nor clearly shew us one single Word, which they can affirm was never taken from a more ancient *Tongue*, and from whence they, consequentially may conclude that such a *Tongue* is Original.

But where's the great Difference, whether, in the Constitution of a *Tongue*, Words be Originals, or whether they only be altered and disguised by another *Tongue*; so long as the Disguise and Alteration of those Words renders them difficult to be known again, that is to say, as unintelligible as if they were all *New*. It would be more easy (some may say) to learn a *Tongue* which is but a Dialect of another, and of which our Natural *Tongue* may be also another Dialect: For Example, *Italian* and *French* which are Dialects of the *Latin*, are to such Nations that speak them, reciprocally easy to be understood.

But to this I answer that the greater or less facility to learn them, is nothing at all to the Essential Difference of *Tongues*. A Monkey is more like a Man than an Ox, and yet it is no less a Brute Animal than the Ox. So tho' it were more easy for a *Frenchman* to understand *Italian* than *High Dutch*, yet that is no Reason, but that the *Italian* is a *Tongue* Essentially different, as well from the *French*, as the *High Dutch*; since an *Italian* and a *Frenchman* are at first no way less Barbarous and Unintelligible to one another, than a *Frenchman* and a *High German*.

According to these Ideas, which to me appear the clearest, the most precise, and the most distinct, the *Tongue*, which we at this Day speak is Essentially different from that which was spoke by our Ancestors Three Hundred Years ago. For if it should be said that our present *Tongue* is the same with that of those Times, only in some measure made more polite, more soft, fluent, and harmonious, enrich'd with a great Number of Terms and Expressions;

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pressions; and therefore it follows that there is no other Difference between the Language of our present Times and that of our Ancestors, than what is between a Precious Stone, as yet shapeless and rough, and the same Stone well cut and polish'd; yet all that can be said on this Head will not destroy what I have advanc'd.

For in the first place, it is certain that *Tongues* do change into others, when the Pronunciation of the Letters and Syllables, the Terminations of Words, and the Inflection of Nouns and Verbs are chang'd; when ancient Words are abolish'd, and new ones introduc'd, or when ancient Words are made to signify otherwise, than what they did before. Thus from ancient *Tongues* new ones do arise; and if the Politeness of our *Tongue* is produc'd in this manner, (as we may be easily convinc'd, if we would but compare the Language of *Vilchardoum* and *de Joinville* with our present *Tongue*) I do not see why the ancient *Tongue* should not be quite different from what we now speak, since new *Tongues* are only form'd by the aforesaid Changes.

Secondly, it matters not what Causes they are, which produce the Change of a *Tongue*, whether it be Politeness or Barbarity, if after it is changed, those, who spoke it naturally before, understand it no longer; for why should Politeness be deficient in making a new *Tongue* any more than Barbarity, if Politeness can make as notable Changes therein, as Barbarity?

Thirdly, if we compare a *Tongue* to a Man who has pass'd through all the different Ages of Life, as first his Infancy, secondly his Childhood, thirdly his Youth, fourthly his Virility, and afterwards creeps by a Gradual Declension into his Grave,

Grave, and yet notwithstanding all this still continues the same Man ; I should desire that the time of the Birth of a *Tongue* should be assign'd me in order to remark its Infancy, and afterwards all its other Ages. But this is what never can be done. It would follow likewise that *Tongues* should be born and dye like Men, that it may be said of them, this *Tongue* had Yesterday no Existence, but to day it has ; this *Tongue* did exist Yesterday, and to day it is no more. Farther it would follow, that the Growing *Tongue* should be ingender'd from the deceas'd ; for as Man cannot proceed but from Man, so *Tongues* cannot be born but of *Tongues* : And that this Change should be made in such manner as to make it unlike to what it was before ; as a Daughter is oft unlike the Mother that gave her Birth, that is to say, that Men should, in the Evening, speak one Sort of *Tongue*, and the next Morning another entirely different. But all this is impossible.

Thus to speak clearly and freely of Things, I say that *Tongues* do by an insensible Progress change, whether it be for better or worse ; and that when they are advanc'd to such a State either of Perfection or Corruption, (which you please to call it) that those who naturally spoke and understood them before, can neither understand nor speak them any longer ; then are they suppos'd to be New *Tongues*, and the Old Ones are no more : This is what heppen'd to the *Tongues* of our fore-Fathers, for to Day we do not understand them, and 'tis very probable they could not understand us : It follows then that they spoke a Language different from ours, and that we speak a *Tongue* unlike theirs.

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But how shall we call that, by which Men pass from the *Old* to the *New*, for that is a *Tongue* as well as the others? It is compos'd of both, and one while retains more of one, another while more of another; but properly is neither one nor the other. For myself, I have neither Wisdom nor Learning sufficient to conceive certain and distinct Notions of all these Things, and I could wish that some of these great Critics, from whom nothing is conceal'd, would be pleas'd to teach us what we are to think and how to express ourselves upon this Subject; for what I say in this Place, is less effectual to clear up these Matters, than to shew that I do not conceive how they can be clear'd up, and that consequently there is nothing more unprofitable, than to attempt to make a Distinction in *Tongues*, and to assign them Bounds. The late *M. Mure* was wont to say that there was not, in all *Europe*, a Living *Tongue*, which exceeded the Date of Six Hundred Years; but he might with more Justice have said, that no Living *Tongue* now in Use had a Being Six Hundred Years ago.

There are several Glossaries of the *mean* and *low* Latin, which give us to understand that that *Tongue* was sometimes more and sometimes less corrupted. But to know whether *low Latin* in Effect is *Latin* or not, we should want some one of the ancient *Romans*, such as *Virgil* or *Cicero*, to step back, and see if they could understand that *Tongue*; if they could, we might say that in Effect it is *Latin*, but if they could not understand it, (as there is a sufficient Reason to believe they could not) this then could not be *Latin*. In
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short, Men equally call the Language which was spoken at *Rome* under the first Kings *Latin*, with what they call *low Latin* now. In *Cicero's* time the first *Latin* could not be understood without studying it; nor could *base Latin* be acquir'd without the same Pains; but this does not evince that the last in Effect can be said to be true *Latin*: What Resemblance is there between the *Latin* of *Romulus's* Time, and that of the latter Ages? Perhaps there is no more than between *Hebrew* and *Greek*.

These Reflections may serve to make us comprehend that there is much more Prepossession and Fancy, than Reason and Truth, in what is said of *Tongues*. And consequently we may, without Willfulness or Obstinacy, refuse our Assent to all that the Grammarians and Criticks do say on this Head, which will be farther justify'd in the Sequel of what I am to say. Hitherto I have treated of the Nature, Origin, Progress and Change of *Tongues* in General, and shall now say something of their Merit in Particular.

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CHAP. IX.

Of the Greek, Latin, and French Tongues.



THE Learned entertain such Advantageous Opinions of the *Greek*, that they make no difficulty of giving it the first place amongst all other *Tongues*. If their Sentiments be agreeable to Truth, and if this *Tongue* has all the Merit which they pretend, 'tis because the *Grecians* had a great share of Wit and Judgment, and employ'd their Talents in the advancement of Arts and Sciences, to such a degree, that *Athens* for a considerable time was esteem'd the chief Nursery of the Muses, and her Citizens the most Learned of the whole Universe. Its People were no other than an Assembly of Philosophers: They were not contented with what they acquir'd by Study, Meditation, and daily Conferences; they ransack'd the Earth and the Seas, travell'd to the most distant Realms, as the *Indies*, *Egypt*, and *Chaldea*, to inform themselves of every thing that in these Places cou'd be Learn'd. And in a Word, they did, for the Acquisition of Arts and Sciences, all, that the most Ardent, Zealous, and restless Curiosity could inspire Men with.

All this Indefatigable Application and Extraordinary Study, could not fail of infinitely polishing and perfecting their *Tongue*. The difference of their Sects, necessarily multiplying Thoughts and Ideas, reduc'd them to a necessity of multiplying their Terms and man-

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ner of Speaking. Thus all things that could possibly conspire to the perfection of a Tongue, concurr'd to the advancement of that of the *Grecians*. It is then no wonder, if it has been carry'd to such an extraordinary pitch of Excellence, as to become the Admiration of all the Learned.

The *Greek Tongue* has yet a farther Advantage over any other that is known to us; And that is, that the *Grecians*, who (at least in respect to us) were the first Inventors of most part of the Arts and Sciences, were also the Inventors of most part of the Terms and Phrases necessarily made use of in them. For, notwithstanding the *Grecians* had taken them from the *Egyptians*, the *Chaldeans* and other Nations; yet it was they that furnish'd the *Romans* with them, and it was the *Romans* who furnish'd us; so that the *Romans* look'd upon themselves as Disciples to the *Grecians* in all Arts and Sciences, and borrow'd from them the greatest Number of the Expressions, Phrases, and Terms which they frequently employ'd, in treating upon those Subjects, and which could not fail of exalting the *Grecians* to a great degree of Superiority above the *Romans*, in their Learning, and in their Tongue.

It may yet be added to the Advantage of the *Greek Tongue*, that it was far more Extensive than the *Latin*; even *Cicero* himself acknowledges this in his Orations for the Poet *Archias*, when, to make the Compositions of this Man more valuable, he says, that his Verses carry'd the Glory of the *Roman Name* further than ever it went before, *quod Græcæ leguntur in Omnibus ferè Gentibus, Latina suis finibus exiguis sane continentur.*

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sinentur. Perhaps he spoke in this wise, to strive the Cause he was pleading, and from the great regard he had for the *Grecians*, whom he always accounted superior to the *Romans*.

The *Romans*, apply'd themselves to the study of the Liberal Arts and Sciences but very late. This is sufficiently plain from what *Cicero* says in the Oration, whereof I have now spoken; *Italia tum plena Græcorum Artium ac Disciplinarum*, which plainly implies, that they were hardly known there in preceding Ages. What a certain Author, call'd *Amasanius*, and one *Rabinius* had wrote before on those Heads, was so barren and ill digested, that their performances were never thought worth the Reading, as the same *Cicero* observes in the first Book of his *Academick Questions*.

This haughty and warlike People did not begin to apply themselves to the study of the Sciences, until they had glutted their Ambition by the Force and Exercise of their Arms. Before the times of *Cicero*, the *Romans* so very much neglected the Sciences, that, when this great Man sought to Comfort himself in the study of Philosophy, and thereby to arm his Soul with Courage to support his Disgrace, or to redress the unhappy Condition of the sinking State; he was (as he tells us in the above cited Book, and elsewhere) either necessitated to Compose a great Number of New Terms, or else to borrow them from the *Greek*, and content himself with cloathing them in the *Roman Dreis*, that is to say, with only giving them the *Roman Termination*.

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He tells us also in the same Book, that he will endeavour, as much as ever he can, to speak *Latin*, *enitar ut Latine Loquar*, (for it is he who speaks under the borrow'd Name of *Varro*;) and he remarks of *Brutus*, that he spoke *Latin* so perfectly well, whenever he treated on any Topick of Philosophy, that he needed no assistance from the *Greek*. And thus it was that *Cicero* exerted his utmost Abilities, in order to render his *Tongue* as perfect as the *Greek*, and also to render the Sciences as easy and familiar to the *Romans*, as they were to the *Grecians*. In truth, it was a Work every way worthy of a Man of his Spirit, Learning and Reputation, to remove from his Country that shadow of Inferiority which then Ecclips'd it in Comparison of *Greece*, as to eloquence, Arts and Sciences; and to bring matters to that pass, that if they excell'd the *Grecians* in the Arts of War and warlike Exploits, they at least should equal them in the Improvement of Sciences.

This was *Cicero's* chiefest Aim in all the Treaties of Philosophy and Rhetorick which he wrote, wherein may be seen, how much he endeavour'd to give *Latin* Names to all the Tropes and Figures: Nevertheless it is certain that the *Romans* never Cultivated the Sciences with such Assiduity and Application as the *Grecians* did, because they bent their Genius another way; which made *Quintilian* say, that the *Grecians* were more Learned, but, at the same time, that the *Romans* very far excell'd them in all Moral and Heroick Virtues, as *Cicero* also said before him.

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But neither *Cicero* nor *Varro*, who wrote of his own times, have done as much as they might have done, to enrich their *Tongues*, and make it keep pace with the *Greek*; whether it was that they were too reserv'd or cautious, or too negligent in this Case, and chose rather to make use of the *Greek* Terms, which they found ready to their hands, than to be at the trouble of coining such New ones, as they had occasion for, as was customary with almost all such as wrote in those Days. And from hence it comes to pass, that *Tongues*, wherein Sciences were first cultivated, will always preserve some advantages over the rest, if it were but for this only reason, that the Sciences had their birth in them. And this is what *Quintilian* means, when he expresses himself in these Terms. * *Fingere Græcis Magis Concessum est, qui sonis etiam quibusdam & affectibus non dubitarunt Nomina aptare, non aliâ libertate, quam quâ illi primi homines rebus appellationes dederunt.*

No body, since *Cicero's* time, has endeavour'd to finish what he left imperfect. The *Romans* who have treated of the Sciences, have either wrote in *Greek*, or only made use of *Latinis'd Greek* Terms: So that the *Latin Tongue* never reach'd to the Copiousness of the *Greek*, but always left it the glory of being the *Tongue* of the Sciences, altho' it were possible to do as much in *Latin*, as ever was done in *Greek*. *Quintilian* could not avoid saying and acknowledging, that the *Romans* had not a sufficient Opinion of themselves; and that it was owing

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* *Lib. 2. C. 14.*

to their fearfulness or jealousy, rather than their want of reason or ability, that they did not make their *Tongue* as rich and Harmonious as the Greek. * *Iniqui Iudices adversum nos sumus, Ideoque paupertate Sermones Laboramus.* I say, this great Rhetorician could not forbear expressing himself in this manner, tho' in all other points he shews a greater esteem for the Greek than the *Roman Tongue*, out of a prejudice of Opinion, so common to all Mankind, that, *whatsoever we learn by custom is never so excellent or valuable, as that which is the fruit of a tedious and painful Study.*

The same thing may be said of the *French*, in regard to the Greek and *Latin*, as has been said of the *Latin* in regard to the Greek. We have all along accounted the *Grecians* and *Romans* our Teachers, and have not presum'd to behave our selves otherwise than their Scholars. We are so afraid to rid our selves of the Yoke, which were impos'd at Schools and Colleges, that we have not Courage enough to attempt to do for our own *Tongue*, even as much as the *Latins* did for theirs. We dare not make use of it in all sorts of Writings and Exercises, nor enrich it with all the Terms and Expressions we stand in need of, in order to treat of all sort of Subjects with Strength and Eloquence. And yet the defect lies not in the *Tongue*, but our selves, because upon the supposition of an equal Improvement, in every *Tongue* there is a certain equality.

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* *Lib. B. c. 3.*

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If Sounds considered in themselves are absolutely indifferent to signify all sorts of Things, and Thoughts, all sorts of Beings and Forms of Beings; it is certain that there is neither Thing, nor Thought, nor Being, nor form of Being, which may not be join'd to any Sound, and express'd in any *Tongue* whatever. If there be any *Tongue* that claim a superiority, it must certainly be the *Hebrews*. A *Tongue*, that came immediately from God, must undoubtedly have divers perfections which no other can attain. But I offend not I hope the Majesty of that Sovereign Being, which inspir'd the first Man with this *Tongue*, when I say that he might have done in any, or all the other *Tongues*, as much as he did in the *Hebrew*; that he might have instructed Man in his Almighty Will; that he might have reveal'd all the Mysteries of Heaven, and given all his awful Commands, in any other *Tongue*, and even in the same manner, that he did it in the *Hebrew*: Because all that can be done in one *Tongue*, may certainly be done in another.

I might venture to say farther, if it be true that God reveal'd to *Moses*, and the other Prophets, those Mysteries, which he was willing all Mankind should know in every Country and *Tongue*, (since it was his determin'd Will, that the knowledge of his Name should be carry'd through all the Earth,) there is then a necessity to believe that whatever is contain'd in the *Hebrew*, may be express'd in every other *Tongue*; and that every Man is able to speak, and write the Sense of it in all sorts of Characters: Otherwise it may be said, that God had affix'd his Tremendous Truths, and con-

frequently the Salvation of Man, to some certain Sounds and Characters; which in effect would be a Madness and Frenzy only becoming the *Cabal*. We must however always except the *Hebrew*, not because of its Nature as a *Tongue*, but because of the use God was pleas'd to make of it in instructing his Servants, the Prophets.

It is sure and manifest then, that no one *Tongue* can have a real and absolute Advantage above any other; that all *Tongues* may be carry'd to as high a degree of perfection as another; and consequently, that all the Elaborate Discourses, by which the Value of the *Greek* and *Latin* are enforc'd, to the prejudice of living *Tongues*, are only Demonstrations of the Infatuations and fond Conceits, wherewith our Masters and Tutors have inspir'd us.

These general Maxims, whereby I have endeavour'd to reduce all *Tongues* to an Equality, may not as yet perhaps be sufficient to dissipate the Prepossessions of the fond Admirers of dead *Tongues*; and for this reason I think it proper to come now to an Examination of all the Qualities, which give value to any Language. This is what I propose in the remainder of this Little Treatise; and herein I shall shew that whatever it is, that makes Dead *Tongues* estimable, either is, or may be, found among all other *Tongues*. The *French* I intend to make my Example, and what I shall say thereupon, may withall imaginable ease be apply'd to any other.

CHAP. X.

Of Perspicuity.



It is a Maxim that can never be contested by those, that have in the least examin'd what Speech is, and for what end it was given, that clearness or perspicuity makes the first, and perhaps the only real Merit of Discourse. This is a truth which the Grammarians and Rhetoricians never cease to repeat, *Perspicuitas Orationis summa Virtus*. The Truth is, if Man only spoke to make himself understood, that is to say, to represent to other Men's understanding the same Ideas, that he conceives in his own; our first view, and greatest address wou'd be, to express our selves in so clear a manner, as might convey our Conceptions to others, without any manner of Obscurity or Equivocation. Even Aristotle himself, tho' a very obscure Author in what he has wrote, has nevertheless accountd clearness of Expression, as the principal part of an Orator.

For if our Discourse is not capable of making our Thoughts understood, what is there that can do it? *Quintilian* tells us, That a Discourse, must be very faulty, when it requires an Interpretation. * *Oratio vero cuius summa Laus perspicuitas, quam sit vitiosa, si egeat Interprete!* But who is able to be the Interpreter of an

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* *Quin, Lib. 1. c. 6.*

ambiguous and obscure Discourse? He that undertakes to do this, may be mistaken in his Exposition; and, in matters of ambiguity, others are not bound to believe, that the Interpreter has explain'd himself clearer, than his Author.

St. *Augustin*, who may be accounted amongst the first Rank of *Rhetoricians*, holds perspicuity in such great esteem, that he makes no scruple to prefer it even to purity of Diction, when they cannot both be had together. He was of Opinion, that, in speaking to the People of *Africk*, whose Ears were not made to distinguish the Pronunciation of the Word *Os*, signifying a Mouth, and the same Word *Os*, signifying a Bone, we should use the old Word *Ossum*, to remove all Equivocations; because (says he) the purity of Discourse signifies nothing, when it hinders the Person that hears us from comprehending with ease. His Words deserve a recital: *Ossum potius quam os dicere, ne ista Syllaba, non ab eo quod sunt ossa, sed ab eo, quod sunt ora, intelligatur, ubi Afræ aures de Corruptione vocalium, vel productione non judicant. Quid enim prodest locutionis integritas, quam non sequitur Intellectus audientis? cum Loquendi Omnino nulla sit Causa, si quod Loquimur non Intelligunt, propter quos, ut Intelligunt, Loquimur.* And hereupon he praises the Interpreters of the Scripture, for having neglected this purity, to give a more perfect Notion of the Sense of it.

Upon these Principles, which cannot be contested without declaring against Reason, the clearer a Man speaks, the better he speaks; and consequently the siter any Tongue is for Perspicuity of Discourse, the more perfect it is; and the

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the more distant from doubtful and equivocal Senses, the more it merits our esteem. But to do Justice to all, they are all in themselves equally susceptible of this Perspicuity; and obscurity of Stile is not so much a defect in the *Tongue*, as it is in the Writer; for in every *Tongue*, those that are sufficiently Eloquent, can both speak and write with clearness enough.

I except not the *Hebrew*, how obscure soever it be in the only Book, which we have remaining in that *Tongue*; because that obscurity comes from a particular Order of the Providence of God, and not from the Nature of the *Tongue*. *Hebrew* was as clear to those that spoke it then, as the *French* is to us. For if it had been obscure in common usage, How could the *Hebrews* have form'd any Society, or kept up a Commerce together? It would have been a very pleasant thing indeed for one *Hebrew* to have been oblig'd to study the *Language* of another, in order to capacitate himself to comprehend the other's meaning. What Conversation, What Commerce is there amongst Men, that only speak to one another in Enigmas, and in doubtful and equivocal Terms?

If we except the Books of the Scripture, and the Authors that wrote them, and who were directed by a particular Inspiration from Heaven, to write them in the manner they did, there is no one, we may say humanely speaking, that write, and follow the lights of Nature and Reason in so doing, but who express themselves with all imaginable Perspicuity. As naturally no body speaks, but to make himself understood to those that are present; so naturally no body writes, but to make himself understood to those

that are remote by distance of Place, or that may be so, by distance of Time: It would be the greatest folly to speak or write in such a manner, as not to be understood; and a Man, in such a Case, wou'd deserve neither to be heard or read. Tho' therefore we may be oblig'd to study the *Language*, wherein the Prophets spoke to us from the Mouth of God; yet other Writers must not expect the same Privilege; because there is no Man so exalted in Understanding and Learning above another, as to propose himself to him for an Oracle,

Nothing can be said more to the disadvantage of *Aristotle's* Reputation, than that he wrote on purpose not to be understood, as he is made to tell his Disciple *Alexander*; He might better have spar'd himself the trouble of writing, than to have wrote so, as to be a Torture to Men's Understanding. But we must have more favourable Notions of this Great *Philosopher*, who ought to be consider'd as the Inventor of the Method, and consequently of Perspicuity. We must therefore attribute the difficulty of understanding him, to the things whereof he wrote, and not to the manner, wherein he wrote them; and what he says to his Disciple amounts to no more than this, that it would be hard to understand his Books, unless he were personally instructed by some eminent and well vers'd Proficient in his Philosophy; which is no more than what may be said of all the Books that have been wrote by the Chiefs of Sects, into whose Mysteries we must be initiated, before we can comprehend them: So that the difficulty arises from the subject, and not from the stile.

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If there have been *Philosophers* who have wrote obscurely on set purpose, (as *Plato*, who, in his Letter to *Dionisius* the Tyrant, observes that he would write to him about God, no otherwise than Enigmatically, lest those, who might see his Letter, should discover his true Sentiments.) These *Philosophers* did only imitate the *Prophet* whom God himself directed to write in this way. * *Clement Alexandrinus* fully shews, that the Enigmatical stile of the *Poets* and *Philosophers* is taken from the *Hebrews*. But in this they are not excuseable, since, as I have said before, nothing shou'd be wrote, but what may be discover'd and laid open to the whole World, For † *Intemperantis est Scribere quod occultari velit*, says *Cicero*.

The Author above cited has been blam'd for not explaining himself clearly in his *Stromata*; and the only excuse he makes is, that he fear'd *Philosophers*, puff'd up with the Pride, and self Conceit, and full of Carnal Principles, wou'd abuse Truth if it were nakedly set forth; but as for those who had received the Christian Faith, he said, it would be easy enough for them to discover Truth hid under the Veils, wherewith he had cover'd it. But whatever may be said in Justification of this Conduct, it cannot be right; since 'tis exposing those, whom we pretend to instruct, to the danger of receiving Errors for Truth, and exposing our selves likewise to the suspicion of abetting Error;

* *Strom.* 2. c. 5.

† *Accad. qu.* 1.

Error; a thing, which in writing every Author ought more especially to avoid.

The Fathers indeed, in those Times, when Christians and Pagans liv'd promiscuously together, did not speak altogether so clearly of some of the Mysteries of our Holy Religion, when they spoke in Publick, and in Assemblies where any *Pagans* or *Catechumens* happen to be. But the Faithful very well knew what they meant, because they perfectly understood the signification of the figurative Expressions, which those Fathers made use of: So that the Reservedness, affected by the Fathers on such Occasions, does not properly fall under this vicious obscurity of Style.

I may farther add, that we frequently call Authors very obscure, when it happens that we do not perfectly understand the *Language* they write in; for one must necessarily have the assurance of a Modern Critick, to pretend to know *Greek*, as well as *Aristotle*. If then we neither know the things which were wrote by some Ancients, nor the *Tongues*, wherein they wrote them, 'tis injustice to reproach them with obscurity; because they could not prevent their Writings from becoming obscure to us, for the reasons which I have now observ'd, and for many more, that may be alledged.

I have said all this to intimate, that neither Author or *Tongues* do merit Esteem, but in proportion to their facility of being understood; tho' we must not always impute their obscurity either to them, or to the *Tongues* wherein they write.

Now I shou'd be glad that any body cou'd give me a sufficient reason, why we may not write

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write and speak as clearly in one Language as in another. If every Man did but know his Native Tongue perfectly well, he might speak and write therein, with the same clearness and as much facility, as the most excellent Greek or Latin Authors did in theirs. If there is any Tongue, that in this respect has an advantage above the rest, I should not scruple to say that it is the French, at least we may dispute it with the Latin, in respect of the plainness of its Constitution, and the easy and natural scituation of all its Terms; as we shall see in the Sequel.

I cannot however finish this Chapter, without giving, in this place, an Advice, which to me seems of great Importance, for preserving the Beauty of our Tongue. Hitherto we have apply'd our selves to the Simplicity and genuine Construction of our Tongue, which are the foundations of Perspicuity; but I apprehend that we shall grow weary of this simplicity, and fall into the vicious taste of certain Writers, whereof Quintilian makes mention, and who were persuaded that an Expression was said or spoke with wonderful Wit and Elegance, when it required an Interpreter to render it Intelligible. * *Persuasit multos jam ista persuasio, ut id jam demum eleganter & exquisitè dictum putent, quod interpretandum sit*, measuring the fineness and subtilty of their Wit, by that which another must necessarily have to comprehend them. † *Ingeniosi, si ad intelligendas nos opus sit Ingenio.*
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* Lib. 8. C. 2.

† Ibid. C. 11.

The Emperor *Augustus* accounted them foolish, who spoke, rather to render themselves admir'd, than understood. * *Quos mirentur potius homines quam Intelligent.* Since then it may with justice be said, that Perspicuity is one of the prime Characters of our *Tongue*, let us endeavour to preserve it.

* *Sueton. in Aug.*



CHAP. XI.

Of Purity.



NE of the qualities of Discourse, which contributed still more to make it clear and intelligible, and to form in the Mind of the Hearer Ideas perfectly alike to those, which are form'd in the Mind of the Speaker, is the *Purity* of its Terms. But we must first know wherein this *Purity* consists, what it is, and why it has received that Name.

According to the Masters of Art, this *Purity* consists, first, in such Elegance, or choice of Terms and Phrases, as are most capable to make others conceive the things we speak of, with the same distinction, the same clearness and exactness, wherein we our selves at first conceived them. And Secondly in the *Syntax*, or construction of Words, which shou'd always

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ways agree with those that go before or follow, according to the Rules of Grammar.

This, I think, is what produces the whole Purity of Language; and I believe it is call'd by this Name, because such a Language represents to the Mind the most pure Ideas of things; that is to say, it shews them without Mixture, Equivocation, or Ambiguity, perfectly distinct and separated from all other things; and in a Word, such as they really are in themselves, or such as the Author conceived or imagined them to be.

For the better understanding of this we must farther know, what it is that constitutes Elegance of Speech. The Terms and Methods of Speaking are distinguish'd into *proper* and *figurative*: The *proper* are those which are taken in the Signification, to which they were at first affix'd; the *figurative* those, which in their first Institution do signify Things different to what they are apply'd to. Thus *Quintilian* speaks on this Subject, *Propria sunt verba, cum id significant in quod primum denominata sunt, translata, cum aliam Naturam Intelligentiam, aliam loco præbent.* The same Notion agrees with the Matter we are now upon. Terms are call'd *proper*, when they are made to signify the same Things which they signify'd in their Original, and *figurative*, when they are taken in another Sense. Now the *proper* and *figurative* do equally serve to the Elegance of Discourse; the *proper* make us conceive the Natural Ideas of Things; and the *figurative* serve to render these Ideas more lively and bright, and to give more Lusty and Noble Sentiments of the things whereof we speak; because these *figurative* Terms are commonly taken from things which

which are best known and most esteem'd, in order to give a clearer Sight and higher Estimation of what we are then discoursing.

Figurative Terms were first invented out of Necessity, and because proper ones were wanting; but afterwards Men came to make use of them not only thro' Necessity, but for Pleasure likewise, and that a certain Variety might make the Discourse more agreeable. † *Translataverba necessitas genuit, post autem delectatio celebravit.* And 'tis then that we speak both *Elegantly* and *Purely*, when we know how to make a fit use of both, when we know how to mix them together so, as to make them fit to produce the Effects which we propose to ourselves, which is both to instruct and persuade.

Now there is no *Tongue*, wherein these kinds of Terms and Expressions are not already, or may not be found; and consequently there is none, wherein we may not speak both *Elegantly* and *Purely*. If the *Tongue* is not as yet become either sufficiently rich, or sufficiently copious to furnish Phrases both proper and figurative; this Deficiency may happily be remedied by the Care and Industry of Learned Men.

Some Authors will have it, that an *Elegance* of Diction comes from its Elevation above the popular *Language*: But be that true, yet there is no *Tongue*, wherein we may not form a *Style*, quite different from that of the *Vulgar*, and becoming the Dignity of the Things we treat of.

For in short, if the *Greek* and *Latin* have proper Locutions to signify such a thing, or paint such an Image, why should we not imagine that the *French*, for instance, has the like? To
name

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name things properly, and to express the Thoughts and Movements of the Soul, we need only conceive them aright, and form clear and distinct Ideas of them; and then we cannot fail of cloathing them with just and natural, and even great and noble Expressions. *Socrates* was wont to say that we always speak well upon whatsoever Subject we thoroughly know. *Omnes in eo quod Sciunt, satis esse Eloquentes*: So that, when Men go about to dispute the Advantages of a Tongue, and its Abilities to serve them on all Subjects and all Occasions, the first thing they should do, is to dispute the faculty of just thinking: For if they could think as well as the *Greeks* and *Romans* did, it would be impossible but that they would write and talk as well too. Supposing it true then that the *French* is not yet in this Perfection, there is nothing in itself that hinders it; for if it is not yet sufficiently furnish'd with Words and Forms of speaking, we may but do, as the *Greeks* and *Romans* did, and we need not fear the Malice of Criticks, that take an Offence at every new Word.

Purity may then be found in every Tongue, since every Man may think as justly as another. Neither can any one Tongue pretend to outvie another in this particular, at least in the Judgment of those, that make use of their Reason, and will not suffer themselves to be dazzled by the great Phrases that are usually employ'd to extol the Elegance of *Greek* or *Latin*, in Contempt of other Languages.

CHAP.

C H A P. XII.

Of Neatness.



Neatness is a further Perfection in Language, that is principally intended to make it clear and intelligible. Now this *Neatness* arises from the justness of its Composition ; that is to say, from the Order and right Disposition of Words in Phrases, and the due Regulation of those Phrases in Periods ; because when each Phrase and Word is plac'd in its right Order, and where it ought to be, to perform its proper Office, the Discourse cannot fail of being *clear* and *intelligible* ; since in this Situation, every part contributes, as much as possible, to make it understood. Whereas when the Composition is embarrass'd, and the Phrases and Words out of their natural situation, the Discourse must necessarily be obscure, ambiguous, and equivocal ; because we shall be at a Loss to find out the Concord of all its Parts ; not to say that a Discourse of this kind often carries a quite contrary Sense than what the Author intended.

Words and Phrases, whereof a Discourse is compos'd, may not unfitly be compar'd to Stones, that are to raise some Order of Architecture, or to Pieces of Timber, that are to be fashion'd into some curious Work ; for if each Stone and Plank be not jointed to what it corresponds with, it answers not the Design of the Carpenter or Architect, but produces a quite contrary Effect.

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The regularity of Construction, or what we call *Syntax*, is another Cause of *Neatness* and *Elegance*. For when the Relation between the *Nominative Case* and the *Verb*, and between the *Substantive* and the *Adjective* is not perceivable, it is impossible to apprehend the meaning of the Sentence; so that a fault in *Syntax* is equally a Transgression both against *Neatness* and *Purity*.

Now this is the Reason that the perfection, which arises from the natural Order of the parts of Speech, and from the Regularity of their Composition, is call'd *Neatness*: The word comes from the Latin, *Nitere*, which signifies to shine or reflect a great Light; and this Term we make use of to denote the Impression, which bright and polish'd Bodies make upon our Eyes, when, by the smoothness of their Surface, they reflect a great deal of the Light, that falls upon them: And in like manner, a Discourse, where all the Words are placed in their Natural Situation, and regular Construction, and where every part is rang'd in its proper Order, without any Error or Confusion, cannot but reflect all its Light; *i. e.* cannot but carry into the Hearer's Mind all the Sense that the Speaker wou'd impart; and so the word *Neatness* is no improper Term to express this Perfection by.

Now there is no Language that is not capable of this perfection, since nothing can hinder its right position of Words and Phrases, and its exact observance of the Rules of *Syntax*. If some excel others in this Regard, they must be such, as place their Words in their natural order; *i. e.* make them follow, in Discourse, the same order, that their Ideas have in the Mind; but

this is what every *Tongue* requires. For if *Tongues* were given unto Men, for no other purpose than to denote their Thoughts by outward Expressions, then ought they all to follow the natural order of their Thoughts, and every Word shou'd present it self in the same rank, wherein the Idea, it signifies, does: If some by Art have deviled any other order than this, they have so far corrupted Nature, and injur'd the *Language* they pretended to amend.

This however is what all the *Rhetoricians*, and chiefly the *Poets*, have done in the *Latin Tongue*; they have revers'd and confounded the order of Words, to find out Cadences more agreeable to the Ear: But this Artifice is ill contriv'd and badly founded. For since Cadence or Number is no way comparable to its *Neatness*, nothing shou'd be done for the former, in prejudice to the latter; nor is it any commendation to the *Latin Tongue*, that Men have introduc'd a number so contrary to Nature; since this plainly shews that it naturally wanted *Number* before.

Quintilian somewhere or other tells us, that nothing hurts the Perpicuity of Language more than the Intricacy and Confusion of its Words; and, after having spoke of several things that make a Discourse obscure, this blending of Words, he says, is the worst of all, *quibus adhuc peior est Mistura verborum*. I am surpriz'd how he cou'd mention this fault, without perceiving, that therein he blam'd all the *Roman Authors*, who were universally addicted to it; or how he cou'd instance in this Verse of *Virgil*.

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Saxa vocant Itali, mediis quæ in fluitibus, aras, &c.

For an Example of confus'd construction, when the very best of their Prose-Authors are full of the same perplexity. There is not a Page in *Cicero*, wherein Instances of this kind may not be found, and even in those Pieces, which require more than ordinary *Neatness* and *Simplicity*: As for Verse, 'tis not so much to be wonder'd at, by reason of its constraint in point of Measure. There is such a great confusion of Words almost in every Line of *Horace*, that it is impossible to perceive his Sense without transposing each of his Words into their Natural place. Mr. *Labourerour* has abundantly shewn the great Advantages of a direct and Natural Construction in the *French Tongue*, how much it excels the Intricate and Confus'd construction of the *Latin*, without a Necessity for my saying any more.

It is not however the *Latin Tongue*, as I said before, that we ought to blame on this account; 'tis rather the Authors, who have introduc'd this Artifice; for I cannot believe that the *Romans* spoke in this manner. Men naturally speak as they think. It is manifest then, that this Construction is the Work of Art, and Art is always ill contriv'd, when it prejudices Nature, since its whole aim shou'd be to imitate Nature; for to speak well, and write well, is to speak as we think, and write as we speak. Now if this *Tongue* was not harmonious enough in a Simple and Natural Construction, it had been much better to have left it in its Natural Simplicity, than to have

sought out such an exquisite harmony, at the expence of its clearness; since every thing that destroys Perspicuity can never be any other than a fault.

But what is very wonderful, is, how so many *Rhetoricians* and *Grammarians* come to admire this Construction. I have seen it applauded in a Modern, because it kept the Mind attentive and in breath, unto the end of a Period, in order to conceive all that the Orator had to say. But there appears to be no Solidity in this reason: For in whatsoever manner this Construction is made, whether it be agreeable or contrary to Natural order, yet still, the Hearer or Reader waits the end of the Period, before they form their Thought, *Etenim expectant aures, ut verbis Colligatur Sententia*; and for this Reason Periods of too great a length are as fatigueing in our Tongue as in the *Latin*, notwithstanding, that our Tongue ranges its Words in their natural Order. In short, if the Sense be not compleat, until we come to the end of the Period, there is a necessity of going to the end, as well in one Tongue as another, before we can form a true Judgment. For Example, when I read the beginning of the Epistle Dedicatory of Mr. de Vaugelas — “ This small Treatise
 “ has so slender a proportion with the Great-
 “ ness of your Merit and exalted Dignity, that
 “ I cou’d never have had so much as a Thought
 “ of addressing it to you, had you not done
 “ me the honour of letting me understand, that
 “ it would not be disagreeable to you. And in
 like manner when I read the beginning of the
 first Book of Cicero *Definibus*, my mind cannot

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not be at rest, nor can I form any judgment till the Sentence be finish'd. *Non eram Nesciūs, Brute, cum quæ summis ingeniis, exquisitæque doctrinâ Philosophi Græco Sermone tractavissent, ea litteris Latinis mandaremus, fore ut hic noster labor in varias reprehensiones incurreret.* The Mind in both these Instances is equally attentive, until it comes to the end of the Periods, tho' the first follows the order of Conception, and the other does not.

Many other Remarks might be made on the Defects of the *Latin* Construction, (for Instance, many Verses occuring in their Prose) but what has been said will be an Apology for the *French* for making their Construction so simple and natural, but none at all for the other, whose Construction is so artfully contriv'd and study'd.

But 'tis enough for me that I have establish'd this point, *viz.* that there is no one *Tongue*, wherein we cannot naturally dispose, and regularly concord every Word, and wherein consequently we cannot speak with that *Neatness* which is always accompany'd with Perspicuity, and with a certain ease, and simplicity, which can never fail of pleasing. When a Man clearly sees whatsoever he means to say, and has his Thoughts rightly regulated, his Discourse will follow the order of his Thoughts, and his Words naturally take their proper places. Now *Neatness* of Thought and Conception, is not a Gift peculiar to Men either of one Country or *Tongue*, but is common to Men of all *Tongues*, and Countries, and consequently, so is *Neatness* of Stile.



C H A P. XIII.

Of Copiousness.

S *Tongues* are given to Men, only for the Expression of their Thoughts, so their abundance and *Copiousness* proceeds from the multiplicity of things which Men know, and the variety of Thoughts that present themselves on all Occasions; so that Persons of great Knowledge and Learning, who meditate much, and thoroughly consider the nature of things, are almost always obliged, by the necessities they are under, to invent Words, in order to make themselves understood, as I have said before. And this *Copiousness* contributes infinitely to *Perspicuity*, since nothing can render a Discourse more Equivocal and Ambiguous, than when the same Words are liable to be taken in a different Sense; as, on the contrary a *Tongue* would be perfectly clear, if each Thing and Idea had its proper Terms and Expressions.

Now it is evident, that as many Words may be invented in any one *Tongue*, as are in another: For there are none, whose Nature is averse to this Invention, since nothing is requir'd for the Work, but Men of Sense and Learning. For if one Man's Knowledge may be extended as far as another, there is no necessity that any *Tongue* shou'd continue in its Barrenness.

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When the Romans apply'd themselves to the study of Philosophy, they immediately perceived that they wanted Terms. They took a great many from Greek Authors; and they made some themselves, as the Grecians had done before them, for so Cicero says; *Dabitur enim, ut in rebus inusitatis, quod Græci ipsi fecerunt, à quibus hæc tandem Tractantur, utamur verbis interdum non auditis*: Because (as he adds) 'tis a common thing for all the Arts to have their proper Language; so that there is a necessity either to make or borrow new Words elsewhere for our use; * *Et id quidem commune omnium fere est artium, aut enim nova sunt rerum novarum facienda nomina, aut ex alijs transferenda*. This is what ordinarily happens to all, who begin to write of Arts and Sciences in any Language whatsoever, not having as yet Terms and Phrases proper for their use, *quæ enim res apud nos non erant, earum nomina non poterant esse Usitata*.

But if there is a necessity for Men to make Phrases and Locutions in a Tongue, in order to treat of things, which as yet have not been treated of; I know not how it comes about, that they are so very Nice in the composition of them, and why they make so great a Mystery of it. It was once said by a Grammarian, that an Emperor with all his Power, could not give a Freedom, in that Republick of Letters, to any one word. This might really be call'd Childishness, because it is not a matter of Power, but of right Reason. When a Word is fitly made, and

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answers

* Acad. q. 1.

answers the Occasion that requires it, it ought to be favourably received, as a necessary sign to make us well understood in such Matters, as we have to treat of; and we are as much obliged to the Author of it, as we are to a Man, who has invented some new and necessary Mechanical Instrument. This Assertion then was only a mere vanity in the Grammarian, who was willing to give an Emperor to understand, that this Power did not extend it self to the Mind, as it did to the Body; and he highly deserv'd to have felt a little of that Prince's Resentment, for the foolish boast of Liberty in those People, that pretend to have the controul of the Empire of Letters.

Cicero understood this Matter better than the Grammarian, when he tells * *Varro*, That he would, in his Opinion, merit very much of his fellow Citizens, if he did, not only enrich them with new Discoveries, but also with new Words, and that he himself wou'd not scruple to use them after him, as occasion requir'd. *Enimvero inquam, Varro, bene etiam meriturus mihi videris de tuis Civibus, si eos non modo copiâ rerum auxeris, ut efficisti, sed verborum; audebimus ergo novis verbis uti, te Authore, si necesse fuerit.* But who, without the highest astonishment, can read these Words of this great Orator, and see the scrupulous fear of our best Authors on this Head? Mr. *de Vaugelas* is of Opinion, that it is not allowable for us to make new Words, that if *Horace* gave this permission, 'twas only to the Romans, and that we ought not to make free

* *Acad. q. 1.*

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free with it, because our *Tongue* is much more modest, and reserv'd.

Upon what Rule of Grammar, of Wisdom, or Politicks, those that talk at this rate, propose to support their reasonings, I cannot tell: Do they believe that Grammar or Rhetorick forbids us to augment and enrich our *Tongue*; that it is Wisdom in us to continue in an Impotence of expressing our selves perfectly, when we have it in our power to do it? or has the Magistracy made any Laws to deprive us of a freedom, we have by natural Right, since *Language* is given to assist our Understandings, as much as it can? Our *Tongue* has, in this respect, no other Genius than what all others have; the Principles of *Horace* are common to them all, and the Gravity and Reservedness, for which those Gentlemen commended it so highly, is only a Pusillanimous fear, they indulge themselves in, to the Detriment of Arts and Sciences, as well as *Tongues*. For by what Methods can Sciences make any progress, if Learned Men are not allowed to form Terms and Fashions of Speech proper to illustrate new Discoveries? Or by what means can *Tongues* be perfected, if we are still to continue in this reservedness? But this is only spoke with deference to better Judgments.

There is not then sufficient Reason to condemn those, who are so daring as to invent some Words, which their Occasion requires, provided they do it with Judgment and Discretion, and according to the necessary Rules, which ought to be observ'd in that affair. The late Mr. *Menage* has been reproach'd for boasting
that

that he was the Inventor of the Word *Profator*: If indeed he made it to gain Applause, he well deserv'd to be banter'd; for 'tis but a poor matter to glory in the Composition of a Word, and there is no Invention, tho' never so inconsiderable, but what deserves more praise. But if he only said it, to shew, that, in the *French Tongue*, they had not a Word to signify an *Author who writes in Prose*, as the Word *Poeta* signifies a Man that writes in *Verse*, and that the Word *Profator* might be used in that Sense; I see no reason why it shou'd not be receiv'd, or another, more significant and more Analogous to the *Tongue*, be invented in its Room. In short, nothing appears more contrary to reason, or shews the ridiculous jealousy of Writers more, than to reject and dispise a Word, without having any other to signify the same thing; for how could we have ever brought our *Tongue* to what it at this Day, if we had servilely adhered to the Rules that such Men set us?

Either then we must of necessity forbear to improve and enrich our *Tongue*, or give a more favourable reception to new Words. But to whom (say you) will this right of making new Words belong? *Plato* was of Opinion that every conceited Man was not to make them according to his own Caprice, because this would be a means to throw a *Tongue* into such Confusion, that Men wou'd not be able to understand one another, when every one was forging Words, and introducing them at pleasure.

* *Profecto se daretur cuique arbitria & demere & addere,*

* In *Cratyl*,

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addere, magna utique esset licentia, & quodlibet nomen cuique rei Unusquisque tribueret. 'Tis then unto the Learned that this Priviledge belongs; it is unto those who write, and who perceive, in writing, that there are certain Terms wanting in their Tongue, which would be commodious for them, and for want of which, they are often oblig'd either to express themselves imperfectly, or to have recourse to Circumlocutions, which very much lengthen the Discourse, and make it tedious to the Reader.

Every one allows that all Artisans have the Right of inventing their own Tools and Instruments, to carry on their respective Trades: And why should we doubt but that the Learned have an equal right to make such new Terms and Words, as they find wanting and necessary; since the Invention of most part of the Terms of Art, whether they be the Names of their Tools, or of their different ways of working, is owing to the Artificers themselves? For instance, Who is it that found out the various Terms of Agriculture, all the divers Names that distinguish the qualities of the Earth, and the effects of the Influences of the Stars over Plants and Fruits? Were they not Country Clowns? and yet no body thought fit to dispute their Prerogative in these Affairs; we use their Terms at this Day, and we do well to use them, because they fully signify what they were intended to do; and the same we may say of all other Artisans.

Why then should not a Learned and Judicious Writer have the same Privilege? None is more capable of the business than he, since none understands the Subject he is upon, and what new Thoughts do arise from it, so well as he,

he, and consequently, what new Phrases and Dictions are necessary, were it only to diversify his Discourse, and prevent its being nautious, by a continual repetition of the same Sounds.

It is very certain, that there are Rules to be observ'd, as I have said above. As first, that no Ostentation should appear in such a Work; but on the contrary, that it should be visible it was pure necessity which constrain'd the Author to make such a Term. Secondly such a Term shou'd not be coin'd, as it were by hazard or Caprice, but shou'd be taken from other known Languages, such as the *Greek* and *Latin*; or else from the Nature of the Thing, (as the name of a *Triangle* is given to any Three squar'd body, becaule of its being of that make) or else from some other thing, that may have a resemblance to what we are speaking of, (as the Name of a *Sun-Dial* is given to that Instrument which shews, by the Sun, the Hour of the Day) otherwise this new invented Word will be unintelligible. Thirdly we should consult the humour of our own *Tongue*, in order to give it proper Pronunciation and Termination. These Rules and whatever else the Masters of this Art shall think fit to prescribe, will prevent any ones excepting against the Invention of a Word, nor caviling at the Inventor, as some malicious Criticks did with our *French* Author, even as if he had been guilty of Treason. 'Tis nothing at all that a Word at first seems harsh and jarring, a little age and usage will soften that.

* *Que primo dura visa sunt usu Moliuntur.*

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But here I must by the bye say, that we shou'd endeavour always to make our Words as proper to the *Tongue*, where into we adapt them, as we possibly can. That is to say, we shou'd make their Composition *French*, or at least derive it from the *Latin*, or any other *Tongue*, that has an Affinity with the *French*; As the Word *Triangle* before-mention'd was made from *Tres* and *Angulus*, which are both *Latin* Words, and more proper to signify what it does, than the Word *Trigone* would be; because it is more *French*. This we shou'd do, in all Arts and Sciences, that we may make their Precepts and Notions more easy and familiar, and not clog them, as is usual, with obscure and mysterious Terms, that are almost unintelligible; inso-much, that Men are oblig'd to make a particular Study of the Terms themselves, tho' the Arts and Sciences are sufficiently difficult, without this additional Trouble. This Method of composing Words would infinitely tend to the beauty of a *Tongue*; it wou'd give it a more Original Air: Especially if we always take, from what is the Foundation of our *Tongue*, such Materials, as are necessary for the coining the Words we want, at least, whensoever we can find them there.

We are allow'd even to make use of a *Country* Word, when we cannot find one in Fashion to signify our Thought: For perhaps the *Country* Word may be more significant than any we can elsewhere find. Nor is there any reason to seek for another, when we find a Word ready made to our hands. This was *Cicero's* Method, in treating of Rhetorick and Philosophy: He spoke *Latin* as long as he cou'd, and never
made

made use of *Latinised Greek Words*, but when he found he could not do without them.

But there is one thing to be observ'd by those, that use a new Word the first time, or even a Word that has as yet not received a full Approbation by frequent use, that it ought to be done with Modesty, and with a sort of Submission and Deference to those who are more knowing in the *Tongue*, than they may be; constantly shewing that they are always ready to desist from the use of such a Word, if it be not approv'd by the best Judges, and that they are ready to receive any other, that may be establish'd for the signification of the same thing.

But now, if we shou'd have a Respect and Deference for the Inventors of such Words, as are necessary in a *Tongue*, we shou'd likewise have a strict watch, to prevent the Introduction of unprofitable Words, and such as signify the same things, for which we have a sufficient number of very good ones already. This sort of ridiculous Triflers ought to be slighted, as preventers of the lawful signification of Words, and breeders of endless Confusion in *Tongues*.

But this is enough on this Subject; for my purpose is not, in this place, to give Rules for the Formation of Words, but only to shew, that there is no *Tongue*, that may not become every way as Copious as another, and I hope I have sufficiently done that.

C H A P. XIV.

Of Force and Energy.



HOSE, that make their Boast of the *Energy* of *Tongues*, express themselves most commonly in certain mysterious Terms, enough to make one believe, they are minded to attribute to them a Force, answerable to what the *Jews* of the *Cabala* gave to the first *Tongue*; by the Power of which, they pretend, that the *Patriarchs*, *Moses* and the *Prophets* wrought all their Miracles and Prodigies. *Pythagoras*, 'tis said, cur'd the Diseases of the Soul and Body by certain Forms of Speech; *Zoroastes* made Men both sound and wise by the Efficacy of some particular Words; and, to hear the great Admirers of *Latin* and *Greek* talk, one wou'd be almost tempted to believe, that those *Tongues* had, in some measure, a power to effect the same Things.

God can indeed by his word do whatever he pleaseth, *dixit, & facta sunt*: He can affix so great an Efficacy to certain Words, that, as soon as Men pronounce them, they shall not fail of their operation, (as we know it happen'd in some *Primitive* Exorcisms) and 'twas probably from this power of God's word, that the ancient *Philosophers*, in particular *Pythagoras* and *Plato*, (who were not ignorant of such Tradition) invented their Doctrine of the Force and Efficacy of Words and Signs. We however must not acknowledge that in any Words,
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(except those of the Sovereign Lord of all Things) there can be any other Efficacy, but that of uniting Men together, by a mutual Intelligence of their Wills and Thoughts; a Privilege, that I shall hereafter shew, is no way peculiar to one *Tongue*, more than another.

There are but two Things, says Mr. *le Laboureur*, of any great Consideration and Concernment to the Perfection of a *Tongue*, first, a sufficient Number of proper Terms; and then, a just Disposition of them. In my Opinion he is much in the Right: But if *Number* and *Energy* be likewise thought requisite, whence, I pray, does *Energy* arise, but from a propriety of Terms, or whence *Number*, but from their apt Order and Disposition? And I have already prov'd that every *Tongue* is capable of these. But because this will scarce be enough to satisfy the Partisans of the *Greek* and *Latin*, let us enter into a fair Detail of the Matter; and, to shew, that this *Energy* is a perfection communicable to any *Tongue*, consider a little farther, wherein it does consist.

Now in Order to understand this matter right, we must explain more at large, in what manner the Thoughts and Conceptions of our Minds first pass into Words, and thence into Writing; and to this purpose must in the first place lay it down for a standing Rule, that the External Word is not properly the Word, but rather the *Voice of the true Word*, as has already been said from *St. Austin*; and, for this Reason, Articulated Sounds he calls the *Voice of Words*. We must farther understand that *Writing* is the Expression, or Painting, of the Articulated Voice, as the Voice is the Expression of the Thought

Thought (for it may not be amiss to give just Notions of Writing, even tho' we are treating of Speech, as I shall hereafter shew). Now if our Voice be a Description of our Thought, our Thought must immediately paint it self upon our Imagination, otherwise our Speech cannot describe what our Thoughts are. Our Thoughts are therefore follow'd by certain Stroaks in the Imagination, these Stroaks are again follow'd by those of Words, and those of Words by those of Writing, whenever we are minded to describe our Thoughts.

In this Order all the different Images of our Minds are form'd, and form'd with such Celerity, that we think them done in the very Instant, and sometime believe that they were done at all; for it is certain, that, as the Thoughts of the Things we know, and whose Names we know, are always accompanied with certain Stroaks of the Imagination, which represent their Names; so we can hardly at first sight perceive the Necessity of our Thoughts painting themselves in the Imagination, in order to be describ'd by Words; and some may be apt to think, that this whole Impression upon the Brain or Imagination, is no more than a pure conceit. This however is incontestable, that these matters are thus transacted, and that it is impossible for us to speak of any thing we have but barely thought on, without having our Thought accompany'd with some certain motion of the Spirits in our Brain. For this Reason it is, that we so frequently say, *That a Thought has escap'd us*, i. e. pass'd too quickly thro' the Brain, to leave any Traces to make us remember it, tho' it did not pass so quickly

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either, but that it made some slight Impression; otherwise we cou'd not so much as remember that it had escap'd us.

Even Things the most abstracted and Spiritual we can think of, must be cloathed with certain Images, before they can be expressed by sensible Signs. Thus, when we think of God, of Angels, of Justice and Truth, there is a Necessity, that the Ideas we conceive of them should make some Impression upon our Imagination, at least, that the Names we give them should do so, otherwise it would be impossible for us either to remember or speak of them.

If Things extraordinary, and such as have yet no Name be the Subject of our Thoughts, our first Care is to endeavour to give them proper ones; and in doing this, we usually form them according to the Touch that our Thought impress'd on our Brain; and what so frequently occasions a Pain in expressing our Thoughts is, the Traces in the Imagination not being clear and distinct enough, but rather very much clouded and confus'd, so that we are at a Loss by what Terms to express them.

In short, the external Representations, which we make of Things by our Speech, in a great Measure answers the Internal Representation, that is made in our Imagination: If this be exact and expressive of our Thoughts, our Discourse will thereupon become clear and eloquent, but if it be imperfect or unlike, our Discourse will be dark and confus'd: And for this Reason a Man should not only have a Sufficiency of Knowledge, but a Liveliness of Imagination likewise, that is able to represent the just Conceptions of
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his Mind truly, in order to his becoming eloquent.

'Tis farther necessary to remember what has been so often repeated, that it is a Matter of pure indifference to our Thoughts, by what Touches they affect the Imagination, but what Sounds they are pronounc'd, or by what Characters transcrib'd on Paper.

These things being premis'd, we come now to state the Notion of *Energy*: And to me it appears, that a Language is then truly *Energick*, when the Terms and Expressions of it make the Hearer conceive Things, with the same Clearness and Perspicuity, the same Extent and Profoundness, that the Speaker has in his Mind, insomuch that at the very Moment we hear him speak, we seem to have before us the very same View and Prospect of things, that he has.

This I think is the very Essence of *Energy*. But it should be observ'd that this *Energy* depends in part upon the Conduct of the Hearer, who, by the Subtlety and Strength of his Understanding, should be able to discern in the Terms, that the Speaker employs, the full Import of his Mind.

We observ'd but just now by what Steps our Thoughts are reduc'd to writing; but it is certain that every Step they take, they always lose something of their Perfection. Our Thoughts, that are purely Spiritual, cannot but suffer some Diminution in the Corporeal Images that represent them, and in Proportion to their declension from Spirituality, are weaken'd, *i. e.* we do not imagine Things as perfectly as we speak them; we speak them less perfectly than we imagine them; and we write them still less perfectly than

we speak them. The first Draught that is made in the Imagination, does not equal the Original in the Thought; the expressing it in Words makes it less resemblant, and the writing it more unlike than ever. But what does the Mind of a quick and penetrating Reader in this Case? Why it ascends by the same Degrees, that the Thought descended, from writing to speaking, thence to the Imagination, and thence to the Understanding, where the Thought was at first conceiv'd; and there pondering and meditating on the Thought, he supplies it with whatever it lost in the gross and corporeal Images, through which it pass'd. And when a Man by this Means, comes to comprehend the Object of the Author's Thought, as fully as himself did, then has the Author's Words all the *Energy* they can have. All this must be done to understand the full Import of the Author's Sense; and 'tis done with more or less Facility, in proportion to the Reader's Parts; for *Energy* requires in the Reader, almost as much Learning and good Understanding, as in the Author.

I have hitherto only spoke of the Effects of *Energy*, but come now to explain what it is that produces it, *i. e.* what it is that makes Words so very powerful and efficacious, as to carry into the *Hearer's* Mind, all the Weight and Grandure of the *Speaker's* Thought, and this, in my Opinion, arises from the Composition of Words, Phrases and Periods.

It arises I say, from the Composition of Words; because *Simple* and *Primitive* Words can signify no more than one Thing, one single Idea, one Thought, and one Action: So that to swell the Signification of Words, we make use of such as
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are long and compound, which by their Length and Composition may enlarge our Ideas, and for this Reason, *Tongues* that abound with Words of this Kind have necessarily most *Force* and *Energy*.

The Composition of Phrases and Periods contributes still more to this *Energy*. Certain Terms joyn'd together, certain Phrases us'd in a sprightly and judicious Composition, produce Effects, which they could not do in any other Conjunction. They may be compar'd to the several Parts of Machine, which when asunder have no Force, but when conjoyn'd, can raise up the greatest Weight; or to the Stones of a Vault, which by the Dexterity of their Cut and Joynings, cannot only support themselves, but the heaviest Load that is laid upon them: And in like manner, certain Expressions rightly connect-ed, produce Effects, which while they were separate, could never have been thought on.

Figurative Terms and ways of Expression are another Cause of this *Energy*. For these Terms, being commonly taken from things that stand high in our Respect and Estimation, have a great Tendency to make us conceive great Ideas of what we would recommend; as on the other hand they have a marvelous Efficacy to in'use the Sentiments of Contempt and Aversion, when we would disparage. Nay, even Pronunciation itself gives an *Energy* to Words; and the great Admirers of *Greek* and *Latin* seldom fail to enhance the Value of those Languages upon that Score: But this is not so properly the Eloquence of *Tongues*, as it is of Men. We can pronounce our own *Tongue* with as much Emphasis as they can *Greek* or *Latin*, nay we can do it with a better Grace, and upon better Reasons, because

we are assur'd of the right Pronunciation of our *Tongue*, which they cannot be of the other.

Now if these are the chief Causes of the Force and Efficacy of Speech, I should desire to know what Grounds Men have to pretend that one Language has a greater share of it than another. Let but a Man think justly, and have a lively Imagination of what he thinks, and then strong and significant Words will necessarily follow his Imagination, if there are any such in the *Tongue* he speaks; for want of proper Terms he must make Use of *figurative*, and when he cannot express himself otherwise, even frame and devise new ones himself.

But there is no *Tongue*, wherein all this may not equally be done; none, that is not capable of this Composition of Words and Periods, of Number and Cadence, which make a Discourse *Energick* and strong. Thoughts in themselves, have no Affinity and Sympathy with one *Tongue* more than another; and therefore what was at first expressed in *Hebrew*, *Greek*, or *Latin*, may be render'd in *French* with as much Beauty and Loftiness, as in any of them, if he that renders it has but a full and adequate Notion, how great and beautiful it is in the Original.

To make the Beauty of a Man's Shape appear, it signifies nothing what Colour his Cloaths are of, so long as they are cut, and fashion'd by an able Taylor; and in like manner, to convey a Thought to our Senses, it makes not much matter, in what *Tongue* or Form it is cloath'd, provided the Man, that does it, has but a thorough Knowledge and Understanding of it. But this will receive a farther Illustration from what is the Subject of the following Chapter.

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CHAP. XV.

Why the Greek and Latin Tongues are suppos'd to have more Energy than others.

ONE Cause, that makes some Men prefer *Greek* and *Latin* before any Modern *Tongue* in point of *Energy*, is the Inability of some Translators, who, either not sufficiently understanding the *Tongue* of their Author, or the *Language* they translate into, or not having Capacity and Penetration enough to enter into the full Force of the Original, have not represented, in their Translation, all that was contain'd in the *Greek* and *Latin*; because what they did not understand they could not express. Whenever this happens, instead of ascribing the Defect to the Translator, as they should, Men generally impute it to the Language he translates into, and from this misconception form the Comparison; whereas let but a Translator perfectly understand his Author, and be a thorough Master of his own *Tongue*, and he will make *Translations* equal to *Originals*, as we have Instances not a few in Men of our own Nation.

We should not however have near so many Translations, if none undertook to translate, but such as have the aforesaid Capacities; because there is no succeeding in a work of this Nature without them. A Man should almost equal his Author in Learning and Ingenuity; he should at least be able to follow his Sense in every Part, to raise himself as high, and penetrate as far into the Subject, as he did; and then he will not

fail to translate well, and to make his Copy come up to the Original.

Translations too are often thought inferior to Originals, when in reality they are not so ; and from this prepossession it is, that Modern Languages are so far degraded. In the Course of our Studies we form such lofty Notions of Ancient Authors, that we cannot beleive any version can come near them ; Criticks employ all their Knowledge and Ingenuity to make vast discoveries in the Works of Antiquity, and we our selves can hardly be perswaded, that any Men of our Age, whom we daily see and converse with, can be able to bring into such a Tongue as ours (which from our Infancy we speak in common with Tradesmen and Peasants) all the beauties that are found in them.

Nay, Translators themselves most commonly begin with such a seeming distrust and diffidence, both of their own Abilities and the force of the Tongue, wherein they are going to write, that the Reader very easily perswades himself, that the Translation he has before him, will not be found comparable to the Original. 'Tis decent indeed for Men not to presume too much upon themselves, but if they have reason to be diffident of Success, Prudence should direct them to spare their Pains ; nor would I ever advise Any Body to pretend to translate, that is not fastidy'd that he can express, in his own Tongue, all that his Author has done in *Latin* or *Greek*, and that full as well too.

I would then intreat those learned Criticks and Translators, who pretend that nothing can come near the Force, the Beauty and the Delicacy they perceive in the Original, for once to condescend

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descend so far, as to explain (with as many Words and Circumlocutions as they please) what there is, so very great and sublime in those *Greek* and *Latin* Terms and Phrases, they so much admire. What cannot be explain'd by one Word in Expression, may certainly be done by many; and it after all the Talk we allow them, they cannot make us comprehend the whole Extent of the Sense, they pretend to see, they will not be offended I hope, if we tell them that they fancy they see, what in Reality they do not; that by the Heat of their Fancy, and working of their Brain they have subtilis'd their Author so, as to make him think what he never dreamt of; and that he himself (if he were now alive) would be astonish'd to see what exquisite Pains the Learned of this Age have taken, to make him speak what he never once intended.

'Tis with very good Reason, that those, who have distinguish'd themselves in the Art of Criticism, shou'd be accounted a sort of Prophets and Diviners: For, in truth they oftener prove so, than Explainers of their Authors. *Aristarchus* was call'd by this Name, for writing Four Score Books of Commentaries on *Homer*. He tortur'd his Brain sufficiently, no doubt, to find so much matter in the Dreams and Raveries of that Poet, but he had one misfortune in all his vast Commentaries, the want of a sufficient Warrant for what, he imagin'd, was *Homer's* meaning.

Such is the usual Prepossession of all Commentators or Transactors; or perhaps it may be their Artifice to avoid Censure and appear Learned. We never blame a Man for not being able to do, what, he says, is impossible; and
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since Wit and Learning is not discernable, but by Persons of the like Abilities; it may be thought no bad pretence to these Qualities, to know how to discover the like among the Ancients. If we were to suppose that *Horace* had not so much Wit and Delicacy in him, less of both wou'd be requir'd to understand him; or the Remark of *Quintilian* is very true, viz. that we have the same Complaisancy for our selves, when we enter into a Sublime and Delicate Thought, as if we our selves were the Authors of it: * *Cum intellexerint acumine suo, delectantur, non quasi audierint, sed quasi invenerint.* When therefore these Men shall plainly shew us the Beauties they boast of, we will really believe they are there; but while they only try to make us open our Eyes wider than ordinary, to admire things, which they do not explain, but by *je ne sai quois*, they must not be displeas'd, if we cannot believe that their Authors contain so many hidden Mysteries, as they wou'd persuade us.

Another Cause of Prepossession very advantageous to the Energy of the Greek and Latin Tongues, is our usually getting by heart their beautiful Passages, and, whenever we have occasion to make use of them, repeating them in their own Words and Phrases. Hence it comes to pass, that, by perpetually representing the same Ideas under the same Signs, we accustom our selves to confound them so, that we cannot see how they can be separated, or how it is possible to delineate that same Thought so well

* *Quint. 8. 2.*

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well in any other Word or Expression: And this is the Foundation of the common prejudice, that the Language, wherein a fine Thought appear'd at first, always ~~suits~~ *suits* best, and can never so well accord with any other.

These are some of the Causes, that give so great a Pre-eminence to ancient *Tongues* above the Modern; but Reason has nothing to do in all this. Let us but consider the *Ancients* as Men like our selves, be perswaded that what one Man has invented, may be done by another, and learn to strip their very *finest* Thoughts from the *Greek* and *Latin* Phrases, wherewith they are array'd; and then we shall perceive that there is no great disparity, but that all Languages are good and elegant, when we come to be acquainted with their Spirit and Idiom, and can fully comprehend their Author's Sense.

Mr. *Laboureur*, in his Version of the Thirteenth *Ode* of the Fourth Book of *Horace*, has justify'd in a great measure what I here advance: He has reder'd it Verse for Verse, and Stanza for Stanza, and a Man must be strangely prejudic'd, not to confess that the *French* not only equals, but even excels the *Latin*. Whether Mr. *Greech* has been so happy in his *English* Translation of the same *Ode*, I leave to Men of Critical Knowledge to determine: I thought however, that it might be no incurious Entertainment to my Reader (especially that Mr. *Laboureur's* Book is become so very Scarce) to give the *Ode*, and both the Translations together,

Audivere,

AUdivere, Lyce, Dī mea vota : Dī
 Audivere, Lyce, sis anus, & tamen
 Vis formosa videri,
 Ludisque & bibis impudens,

Et cantu tremulo pota cupidinem
 Lentum sollicitas : ille virentis &
 Doctæ psallere Chiræ
 Pulchris excubat in genis.

Importunus enim transvolat aridas
 Quercus, & refugit, te quia luridi
 Dentes, te quia tugiæ
 Turpant, & capitis nives.

Nec Coæ referent jam tibi purpuræ,
 Nec clari lapides tempora, quæ semel
 Notis condita fastis
 Inclusit xolucris dies.

Quo fugit Venus ? heu, quove color decens ?
 Quo motus ? quid habes illius, illius
 Quæ spirabat amores ?
 Quæ me surpuerat mihi ?

Felix post Cynaram, notaque & artium
 Gratarum facies : sed Cynaræ breves
 Annos fata dederunt,
 Servatura diu parem

Pornicis vetulæ temporibus Lycen .
 Possent ut juvenes visere servidi,
 Multo non sine risu,
 Delapsam in cineres facem.

MES vœux sont contens, Isabelle, [vœux,
 Oui, les Dieux, de leur grace, ont contenté mes
 Te voilà vieille, & cependant tu veux
 Faire encore la belle.

En vain, d'un chant grêle & tremblant
 Tu rapelles l'amour, en vain tu ris, tu jouës,
 Il t'abandonne, & s'en va sur les jouës
 De la jeune Yolande.

Loin des troncs sechez il s'arête,
 Et ne prenant plaisir qu'aux fleurs, qu'aux Myrthes verds,
 Il fuit la nége & les tristes hyvers,
 Qui blanchissent ta tête.

Ni le brocard, ni les rubis
 Ne sauroient à ton mal aportet de remede,
 On fait ton âge, & la vielleffe est laide
 Sous les plus beaux habits.

Ce teint tout de lis & de roses,
 Cette grace & ce port qui m'avoient enchanté,
 Las, où sont ils ? & que t'est-il resté
 De tant d'aimables choses ?

Iris n'avoit rien de plus beau ;
 Mais dès son orient le sort fut jaloux d'elle,
 Il nous l'ôta pour laisser Isabelle
 Vivre autant qu'un Corbeau.

Aux jennes gens il la veut rendre
 Un objet ridicule à leur flâme oposé,
 En leur montrant d'un flambeau tout usé
 La samée & la cendre.

THE Gods have hear'd, Lyce, *The Gods have hear'd,*
The Gods have hear'd my Pray'r,
As I have wish'd and you have fear'd,
You're old, yet would be counted fair :

You Toy, you Impudently drink, to raise
Your Lazy dull Desire,
You strive to heighten to a blaze
With your cold breath the dying Fire.

In vain ; 'tis all in vain ; Coy Cupid flies,
A better seat he seeks,
In young soft Cloe's Face he lies
And gently wantons in her Cheeks :

Coy he flies o'er dry Oaks, he scorns thy Face,
Because a furrow'd Brow
And hollow Eye thy form Disgrace,
And o'er thy Head Age scatters Snow.

Nor can thy costly Dress from th' Eastern shore,
With all the Gems it bears,
Thy former lovely Youth restore,
Nor bring thee back thy scatter'd Years ;

Those Years which the Eternal Wheel hath spun,
And drawn beyond thy Prime,
Thro' which swift Day hath nimbly run,
And shut in known Records of Time.

Where is that Beauty, where thy Charming Air,
That shape, that Am'rous play ?
Oh ! What hast thou of her, of her,
Whose ev'ry look did Love inspire,
Whose ev'ry breathing fan'd my fire,
And stole me from my self away ?

Mr.

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Mr. *Le Laboureur* gives us this Apology for the Variation he makes from the *Latin* in his Translation. The *Raillery* wou'd not be just, says he, among us, to represent a Woman amidst Pots and Glasses, or to make a Description of her black Teeth and Wrinkles: The Roman Ladies, adds he, were not so sober, as ours, nor were their Gentlemen so gallant, as we.



CHAP. XVI.

Whether Energy in Tongues be a Fault, or Perfection?



IS opposing a Torrent, I know, declaring against Reason, and taking up Arms against all the Grammarians that ever liv'd, nay, against some of the most sensible and judicious Enquirers into Philosophy, but barely to presume to think, that *Energy* is not one of the greatest Perfections of any Language. This is what every one will tell us: But in the mean while, if we wou'd not be too hasty in our Judgment, but give ourselves Leisure to reflect upon the Reasons, that may make this matter doubtful, we may perhaps be induc'd to confess, that there is some difficulty in the Question.

If all that is said in favour of Perspicuity be true, if it be founded on Nature and Reason, then cannot *Energy*, which is always opposite to

to Perspicuity, be any great Commendation in a Language; since two qualities, that destroy each other, cannot be perfections in one and the same Subject: And yet there is nothing more certain, than that *Energy* and *Perspicuity* seldom meet together:

When a great deal of Sense is compris'd in one and the same word, or in a small number of Words, how shall we do to comprehend it all? It is rather a Set of Enigmas, propos'd on purpose to be explain'd, than a Discourse, that was made to be understood.

I am very sensible that prolix Discourses are seldom lik'd, and that such as are shortest, are naturally most agreeable: * *Naturaliter compendium Sermonis & gratum & necessarium, est, quoniam sermo laciniosus, & onerosus & vanus est,* says *Tertullian*, who was one of the greatest admirers of Brevity, that ever wrote; but if this Brevity occasion so much Obscurity, as it did in this Author (who shou'd have a particular Grammar and Dictionary to understand him) wherein is it praise-worthy? *Quintilian* indeed commends a Brevity that's entire, *merito laudatur brevitās integra*, that is to say, such a Brevity, as expresses all that is necessary to be express'd, in order to remove all obscurity and be perfectly understood; *nihil neque desit, neque superfluat*, and such an one, as in no wise retards the Understanding, or makes a Concealment of the Sense, *moras rumpens intempestivas, nihil subtrahit cognitioni*. If superfluity be a Fault, a Deficiency is no less, nay much more so, since it directly

* *De Virg.*

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rectly opposes, what is the chief end of imparting our Thoughts, which is to be understood.

Now I would gladly know of these Gentlemen the Criticks, where these Languages are to be met with, that admit of this commendable Brevity; and in what Instances a Man may express himself as clearly, in a few words, as in many. 'Tis a Maxim in all Languages, that the * Affectation of too great a brevity necessarily betrays us into obscurity, and when a Man speaks obscurely, 'tis almost the same thing as if he spake unintelligibly, since no one can be assur'd of the Sense of an obscure Speech, and a Speech that is unintelligible, is, in Quintilian's Opinion, vastly trifling and unprofitable. † *Otiosum Sermone[m] dixi[m], quem Auditor suo Ingenio non intellexerit.*

And if there be no great Pleasure to hear a Man speak, whose Discourse we cannot comprehend, there is, in my Opinion, much less to read a Book of this Character, where an affected Brevity casts an obscurity on all sides. If others love not to read much; if they account a great Book a great Evil; I, for my part, love less to Study, and to Study without any certain and real profit: And am of Opinion, that there is more Satisfaction in reading a large Book, which is easy and intelligible, than one of a smaller size, whose Words and Phrases are like so many Cyphers and Hieroglyphicks. For let us but compare the work of easy reading with that of intense studying, and measure the

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* *Brevis esse laboro Obscurus fio.* HOR.

† *Quin. Lib. 8. c. 2.*

time that is expended in both, and then we shall soon see which has cost us most, and thence perceive, what small Reason we have to commend a Brevity, that must cost so much painful and unsuccessful Study, and that a greater compass of Words had been more Eligible, to make the matter more obvious to our apprehension.

It may well become indeed the great Ruler of the Universe to say a great deal in a few Words, as he has done in the Holy Scriptures: It suits his Grandure, to distribute the Treasures of his Wisdom in what manner, and according to what measure, he pleaseth; nor shou'd Man be asham'd to make the Language of his Sovereign Lord his Study: Thrice happy he, who, with all his Labour, can discover any of those Truths, that are therein contained, and whose Knowledge and Practice are his utmost Happiness! But what Superiority has another Man over me, so as to deserve, that I shou'd rack and torment my self, merely to find out his meaning?

Truth is a common Good that belongs alike to all Mankind; and when it pleases God, who is the Fountain thereof, to make it known unto any, 'tis for no other purpose, but that he shou'd distribute it to others, as gratuitously as possible; i. e. very clearly, and very intelligibly; for to retail Truth in such a manner, as to make it unattainable, without great Labour and Trouble, is to sell it much dearer than Silver. 'Tis a precept of the Wise Man's, that we *
shou'd

* Prov. 23. 23.

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shou'd buy Truth and sell it not. And the Sense of that Precept is, that we shou'd spare neither Money nor Pains to come at the Knowledge of Truth, but that, when we are so happy as to have attained it, we shou'd then communicate it with all the freedom and facility imaginable.

God reveal'd his Mysteries, 'as it pleas'd his Almighty Will, and directed the *Tongues* and *Pens* of his Prophets and Apostles in a manner, he judg'd most proper for the Execution of his purposes: He mingled Light and Shadows, Brightness and Obscurity, in their Language; but the Fathers wrote in another way, when they had found out the Sense of the Scriptures by laborious Meditation, they distributed to others, that were not so conversant in them, such Truths, as they discover'd therein, with all imaginable ease and plainness, to make them more intelligible. They purchas'd Truth at a great Price; but afterwards freely bestow'd it: But in the Languages and Books that have a Name for *Energy*, Men act a quite contrary part; they sell Truth dearer than it cost them, by overspreading it with such Difficulties, as this *Energy* occasions: Commentaries upon Commentaries are compil'd to find out the true meaning of such Authors, and sometimes all of them will not suffice to give the Reader full Satisfaction.

But to take a nearer view of the thing, a Man might be tempted to say that this *Energy*, is not only a Cause of great Obscurity, but an Argument likewise of great Poverty and Barrenness in any Language. The Language certainly, that has Names for all Things, Verbs for all Motions, and Expressions for all Ideas,

is therefore incomparably more perfect, because it is more clear, having no necessity to use Words and Phrases in different Senies, and being so far free from Equivocation and Ambiguity.

It is not possible indeed that any *Tongue* shou'd have as many Locutions or Forms of Diction in it, as Men may conceive Ideas of Things, because their Thoughts are boundless; but it is nevertheless certain, that the more Copious a *Tongue* is, the more valuable it must be, because where there is no need to express so many different things by one and the same Word or Phrase, there is less liability to Equivocation, and a nearer approach to what is the sovereign perfection of *Tongues*. 'Tis acknowledged indeed that a Language so extensive wou'd be very difficult to learn, but then the certainty of our Knowledge wou'd abundantly recompence our Trouble.

We may then, I believe, be permitted to doubt, whether the *Energy*, we are speaking of, deserves all the Commendation, that Men commonly imagine; for my own part, I must own, I have not that penetrating Genius, nor am I able to undergo the Labour of searching to the bottom of this abstruse Quality; I love a Language that is more easy and familiar, for since *Tongues* are compos'd of Signs, the more certain and precise these Signs are, the more valuable, in my Opinion, must such *Tongues* be.

Supposing it were true then, that a *French* Man, for Instance, cou'd not express in less than four words, what a *Greek* or *Roman* wou'd say in two; yet shou'd not I esteem the *French* Man less, nay; perhaps, I shou'd esteem him
more,

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more, since I shou'd thereby be better assur'd of the Truth of what he is teaching me, nor know I, in short, any estimation due to any mysterious Expression, except it be those of the Prophets of the true God.

But when it is pretended that in *French* we must use more words to render the Sense of a *Latin* Author, we usually take into our account the Articles, Pronouns, and auxiliary Verbs, which is a wrong way of reckoning. The Pronoun and Verb that governs it, are in effect but one Word; the Article and Noun, the auxiliary and principal Verb are the same. Nouns and Verbs are the only Essential Parts of Speech; all the rest do but contribute to the Elegance and Cadence of it, and shou'd not come in to the Number; so that according to this Computation the inequality will cease.

But suppose the Case, that every word were reckon'd, and that Four in *French* went to express One in *Latin*; yet is the advantage of this multiplicity so great, both to remove all Ambiguity and Equivocation, and to compact our Discourse, and make it fluent and harmonious; that I dare venture to say, the effects of the multiplicity in the *French* are infinitely preferable to any thing that can ensue from this paucity of Words in *Latin*.

But to speak of things as they are in fact, if *Energy* be such a Perfection in a *Tongue*, all *living* *Tongues* are susceptible of it. Custom affixes many Figurative and Adventitious meanings to Words and Phrases, which are quite lost when the *Tongues* go out of use, because Books cannot preserve them all, and those that endeavour to regain them, labour, as it were, to

raise the *Tongue* it self, and restore it to Life again, which is a vain attempt; for how can those lost Meanings be recover'd which were only preserv'd by use or living Tradition? Criticks have no Secret to effect this Miracle, and their Glossaries, in many things, are but pure Conjectures.

The best expedient, in this Case, wou'd have been such Dictionaries, as we have in our *Tongue*, which wou'd have preserv'd the true force and signification of Words in some measure; I say, *in some measure*, because, when all's done and said, use is the best Master of Languages, and 'tis in vain to flatter our selves with the hopes of learning them perfectly any other way: But now this use being no more in dead Languages, because they are dead, and have ceas'd to be employ'd in the Commerce of Life, it must be impossible to find out their true *Energy*, or re-establish them in their former Perfection.

From what has been said, it seems to be plain, that *Tongues* have always more *Energy*, while they are *living*, than when *dead*; which may likewise include the Reason, why *dead* *Tongues* are easier to be learn'd, than *living*; because, since the Time they were dead, they have lost a considerable part of what they were before, *viz.* a great deal of their *Energy*, and of the extent and depth of their signification.

'Tis in this Sense, that the late Mr. Menage had some Reason to say, that it was more difficult to know *living* Languages perfectly, than the *Dead*; and that tho' he had been studying the *French* *Tongue* Fifty Years, he was not as yet become Master of it; he might, no doubt, have made himself Master, in that time, of all

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was contain'd in *Roman* Authors, because their compass is limited: But *living* Languages are, as it were, without Bounds, because they depend upon Use, and Use, every Day, makes either some Additions or Alterations in them, and thereby destroys all certainty of knowledge.

And if *living* Languages are so hard to understand, 'tis a mere Delusion to pretend to know *Latin* and *Greek* so perfectly, since do what we will, we can but know them, as *dead* Tongues; i. e. such as have lost a great Part of what they were. There are besides in every *Tongue*, certain Terms and Modes of Expression, which are not to be found in any other nor can be render'd without Circumlocutions; and if the *Energy* of *Tongues* consists, in a great measure, in these, there is no reason to appropriate it to one more than another. The Time may come, on this presumption, the Time may come, when Men may say the same fine Things of the *Tongue*, we now speak, that Criticks do of *Latin* and *Greek*, and may find in our Writings the same inimitable Beauties, and Graces, and Delicacy, and Force; if they will but abate us the Brevity and *Laconism* of some ancient Authors, because we cannot relish such irregular Compositions, such lame and curtail'd Sentences, as are to be met with in Authors remarkable for this property, such as *Thucydides* and *Tacitus*. Our Genius is abhorrent to this manner of Writing, which is more blamable for its obscurity, than praise worthy for its force; and if these Writers have gain'd a Reputation, it has been for something else, more than their manner, for their good Sense and not their
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Stile;

Stile, which no competent Judge ever yet commended.

C H A P. XVII.

Of Number and Harmony.



HAVING already shewn that all the above-mention'd Perfections of Language are equally common to one *Tongue*, as well as another; 'twill be no hard matter to do the same with relation to *Number*. Number in Language is nothing else but its Harmony and Cadence, *viz.* when its Pronunciation gives a sensible Pleasure to the Ear, to the Imagination, and even to the Understanding it self; for neither the Sense nor Imagination are touch'd with Pleasure, but what the Mind partakes in, nay, there is a kind of *Number*, that the Mind alone can properly judge of.

This Harmony is call'd *Number*, because the Proportions from whence it results, are measur'd by Numbers. But this holds good in Musick only, for the Harmony of Language depends more upon the Sense of Hearing, than any Rational Judgment; 'tis enough, however, that it is the Effect of certain Proportions, to make it be call'd by that Name, for, *Omnis Harmonia & Concentus Numeris constant.*

The greatest Difficulty that occurs in this Question of *Number*, is to know how Grammarians and Rhetoricians can dispute about it; and upon what ground they can maintain, that
some

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some Languages, in this regard, have a pre-eminence, since 'tis certain, that, to judge of the Harmony of *Tongues*, and give any one a due Preference, we must not only have an equal Knowledge in the Harmony of the *Tongues* we are comparing, but a just Notion likewise of what is *Essential* and *Original Number*, which is to be our Rule in the Comparison, and the Standard whereby we may judge of their respective Perfections; for that which comes nearest to this *Original Number* must, without all dispute, be the most perfect.

Now this is what we are at a loss for, we have not a distinct Notion of *Original Number*, and cannot consequently, upon any Principles of Reason, make a just Distinction of the Harmony of *Tongues*, and if we say that the Ear is the proper judge in this Case, the Ear we know cannot help being prejudic'd in Favour of one particular *Tongue*, and will necessarily incline to what is natural to it, as being best acquainted with its Pronunciation, and accusom'd to it, from its Infancy; and if the Ear is sure to be thus perverted, What Justice can we expect from its determination, and how frivolous must the Disputes of Grammarians be upon this head, when the Decisions therein are so uncertain?

In short the Harmony of a *Tongue* depends most certainly upon its Pronunciation, and therefore, know it perfectly, both the Mouth and the Ear shou'd be attempt'd to it: For he, that pronounces a Language not right, spoils its Harmony, and he, that is not accusom'd to its right Pronunciation, cannot relish it. This is what *St. Austin* remarks, when he writes to his Friends about
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his *Books of Musick*, wherein he properly treats of Pronunciation; he says, that 'tis no easy matter thoroughly to understand them, and one Reason that he gives is this — that Words shou'd be pronounc'd in such wise, that, not only the length of each Syllable, but the pauses likewise, and rests, that shou'd interfere at certain intervals, be perceiv'd and felt, otherwise we can neither remark the Cadence of a Discourse, nor make the Ear sensible of it. His words are these, * *Verum etiam pronunciando ita sonare merulas syllabarum, ut eis exprimantur, sensumque feriant, genera Numerorum. Maxime quia etiam in quibusdam dimensa Intervallo miscetur; quæ omnino sentiri nequeunt, nisi Audientem Pronunciator informet.*

Experience will show us the Truth of this. They, that pronounce our *Tongue* with too much Precipitation, startle and surprise us, and those that speak it too slowly, tire our Patience; because the one does not fill the Ear, and the other makes it languish. This is an Observation that *Cicero* himself takes notice of † *Numeros aures ipsæ metiuntur, ne aut non complectitur, quod proponeris, aut redundet.* For give one of the finest pieces of Eloquence, by Men of some Countess, that have a vicious pronunciation, to speak, and they'll soon make it lose all the graces of its *Number* and *Cadence*.

If then it be certain, that Pronunciation is the thing that makes *Number*, it is likewise certain, that we cannot know the *Number* of a
Tongue.

* *Epist. 13. ad Memorium.*

† *De Orat. Part. 1.*

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Tongue, whose Pronunciation we are not perfectly acquainted with; and consequently, have less reason to pretend to understand the Number of a *Tongue*, whose Pronunciation we are absolute Strangers to. Now that we are intirely ignorant of the *Latin* and *Greek* Pronunciation (which is the point in question) needs no other Proof, than the perpetual Contests, that have been among learned Men concerning this matter. Time after Time have Treatises been publish'd about the true Pronunciation of Languages, but never one appear'd yet, that did not meet with some to contradict it.

The Truth is, every Nation adjusts these *Tongues* to its own Dialect and Pronunciation, we pronounce them after the *French* manner, the *Germans* after theirs, and the *Polanders* after theirs, and so of other Nations; which is the true Reason, that these different Nations do not understand one another, even when they speak *Latin*; and has occasion'd several diverting Stories, besides that of *Scaliger*, who desir'd a *Scotch* Gentleman, that was speaking to him in *Latin*, to be pleas'd to excuse him for not understanding him, because he had never learnt *Scotch*.

But we have a stronger proof that neither our *Tongue* nor Ear are made for the true Pronunciation of *Latin*, and that is, our pronouncing their Verse quite otherwise than we shou'd. There are some Verses that we make longer by two or three Syllables, than we shou'd according to the Number of Illusions, that occurs in them; and yet our Ear is so far from being shock'd at this, that on the contrary, it wou'd
certainly,

certainly be so, if we were to pronounce them according to their true Measure. Thus in *et*

Multa quoque & bello passus.

We pronounce the *que* as strong, as any other Syllable, and yet, according to the right Pronunciation, its Sound shou'd be hardly perceiv'd. St. *Austin* observes in several places, that the *Africans* had no Notion of long and short Syllables. I have already mention'd a Passage, wherein he tells us, that they cou'd not distinguish the Pronunciation of the Word *Os*, signifying a *Bone*, from the same Word, when it signify'd a *Mouth*; and yet he assures us, that the *Romans* had a different way of pronouncing it according to its different acceptance; i. e. they pronounc'd it either long or short according as it signify'd a *Bone*, or a *Mouth*, otherwise his Remark wou'd be of no avail: And we perhaps are as little able as the *Africans*, either to express or distinguish the difference of such Pronunciation.

The same Remark he makes in his *Books about Musick*, where he tells us, that the true Pronunciation of *Latin* is lost, and that few now a-days (meaning of the time wherein he wrote) were able to discern the false Cadence of this Verse.

Arma virumque pado, Trojæ qui primus ab oris.

I can hardly believe that any one, at this Day, can pretend to perceive this Fault, otherwise than by Reason, and by what he hath learn'd of the quantity of Syllables, which is our

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our only sure Knowledge of the *Latin* Pronunciation.

All this is enough to satisfy us, how imperfect our Knowledge is of the manner of pronouncing that *Tongue*; a truth, which the Gentlemen of the Academy, in their Learned and Judicious Preface to their History, have made no difficulty to acknowledge; for *dead Tongues* say they, *instead of their true and natural Pronunciation, which is entirely lost, have but an Arbitrary one*; and therefore I wou'd have told that Person, who made it his wish to have heard *Cicero* Harangue, that he shou'd, at the same time, have wish'd to have been born a *Roman*, and in the same Age, when *Cicero* liv'd; otherwise, he wou'd not have had all the Pleasure he imagin'd in hearing that great Orator: In many Places he wou'd have been shock'd at his Pronunciation, and perhaps in several Words not understood him.

What I have observ'd concerning the Pronunciation of *Latin*, may equally be apply'd to the *Greek Tongue*. The late Mr. *Menage* is of Opinion, that we ought to pronounce it, as they do at present in *Greece*, and calls it mere madness to pretend to pronounce it, as they did Two Thousand Years ago. If there is any Reason for this Opinion, it must arise from hence, that we have some certainty in what manner the *Grecians* pronounce at present, but can have none at all how they did it so long ago; And if we have no knowledge of this ancient Pronunciation, how come we to boast so much of its Cadence and Harmony? *Staliger* in one of his Books tells us, that all the World admires the *Greek Jambick Verse*, but few

few or none understand it, and is it not egregious Folly then, to admire so highly what we do not understand?

To be short, the Case naturally stands thus; we are born in different Ages and different Climates, and therefore our Organs are not intirely like the People's that spoke these *Tongues*. For this Reason (if there were no other) we must articulate the Letters and Syllables, and consequently pronounce our Words otherwise, than they did. And if after this, we dispute about the Harmony of *Tongues*, we only speak by Conjecture, and according to our prejudice, Reason can have no share in these Disputes; and consequently we enter into them without its Countenance and Protection.

Some People are of Opinion that these Questions might be decided by Rules of Musick, and that such *Tongues*, as are most proper for Musical Compositions, are doubtless the most harmonious. But supposing it true, that there are certain Languages more easily adapted to a variety of Notes, (which is a point I cannot give up) yet how shall we know, that any *Tongue* has this aptitude, without knowing its Pronunciation; so that there is still a necessity of being assur'd of its Pronunciation.

Others pretend, that some Letters being more soft and easy to pronounce, as *b* and *f*, and others on the contrary more harsh and difficult, as *m* and *r*, the *Tongues*, that abound with the former, cannot fail of touching the Ear more agreeably, whereas such, as make use of the latter, must of course wound and fatigue it; and consequently the former must have the preference in point of Number. To this they add, that such *Tongues* as contain the greatest number of Words compounded of Vowels only, have

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have still the advantage in point of Harmony, because all Sound lies in the Vowels.

Now, tho' we of this Nation shou'd agree in these Observations, because they make for the advantage of our *Tongue*; yet I very much doubt whether Men of all other Nations will do the same. Rules of common use and general approbation shou'd be laid down, otherwise there's no concluding upon any certainty. The Nations, that speak Languages so full of Consonants, will never agree to these Principles: They will pretend, that the harshest Letters, articulating the Voice stronger, and making a greater effect upon the Organ, make a greater likewise upon the Mind and Imagination; and that the *Number* of their *Tongue* consequently is more powerful and strong: They will alledge too that Words, which have few or no Consonants in them, are not sufficiently distinct from the Cry of Beasts, to form a Language for Men: And if there is colour for such Allegations, it will then follow, that every one will reason about these matters according to his particular Temper, and the make of his Organs; i. e. according to his prejudice. Those that have Organs easy to be mov'd will desire to be touch'd but lightly, whereas those that have strong and heavy Organs, will like the Language that occasions a stronger Sensation.

It is certain then, that, according to the state of Nature Things cannot be otherwise. The Organs of the Speech are always proportion'd to those of the Hearing, and the Articulation of the Voice adjusts it self to the Sensation of the Ear: And for this Reason it is, that every Nation is prejudic'd in Favour of its own
Tongue,

Tongue, and accounts it more beautiful and harmonious than any other; insomuch, that a Man, who naturally speaks *Slavonick*, cannot but believe that his Language (how harsh soever it may be with Consonants) has a *Number* as moving and agreeable in it, as any other *Tongue* of the highest Repute and Estimation.

The Advocates for *Latin*, 'tis true, wou'd fain persuade us, that they are more affected with the *Arbitrary* Cadence they give it, than with that of their own *Tongue*. They think it beautiful even in this strange Pronunciation, and how much more so wou'd it be in its Natural? Whether I argue well or no I cannot tell, but for my part, I think, I may affirm the very contrary; that our own *Tongue* is so very beautiful, that I am pleas'd to hear others pronounce'd after it; and, since the Gentlemen, that make this Remark, pronounce *Latin* in the manner they do their Natural *Tongue*, 'tis plain that their Natural Pronunciation is the thing that pleases them.

In Schools and Colleges indeed we are taught to pronounce *Latin* with a great Emphasis and Majesty, to raise it, by this pompous manner, above the Level of our *Native Tongue*: But if the matter lay in swelling the Mouth, and straining the Lungs, we might give as big a Sound to our own *Tongue*, and that with better Reason, because we know for certain the true manner of pronouncing it.

Were it my Business to compare *Tongues* together in point of harmony, I might produce some very good Reasons to shew the excellency of the *French* in this respect. That the *French* is naturally *Numerous*, appears from its simple
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and easy Composition, in which it surpasses the *Latin*, where the Words must be transpos'd and the order of Construction revers'd, to give it a tolerable Cadence. This one Consideration is enough to decide the matter in favour of *French*, since natural Beauties are always more estimable than any other.

If then it be true, that we cannot perfectly taste the *Number* of any *Tongue*, but what is natural to us, because our Organs were made for the Pronunciation of that alone, these sort of Disputes are pure Amusements; and, to speak according to the plain Notions of Reason, one *Tongue* can no more excel another in *Number*, than in any other Quality.

Now there are two sorts of *Numbers*, that may be distinguish'd in every Language, one, that is purely *Natural*, and such as arises from simple Pronunciation; the other *Artificial*, and occasion'd by a proper Disposition of Words, and Composition of Periods; neither is there any *Tongue*, wherein these two sorts of *Numbers* are not to be found: For since all *Tongues* are equally the work of Nature, and form'd by the natural Use of our Organs, they must all necessarily have this natural *Number*, because it is impossible to form a Discourse, without carrying the Voice to such a proportion, and certain measures of Elevation and Depression, wherein this Natural *Number* consists. 'Tis impossible, I say, for a Man to speak otherwise: He must of necessity force out and draw in the Air in this proportion, and therefore, in respect of *Natural Number*, all *Tongues* are equal. * *Id numerosum*

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* *Cic. de Orat.*

merosum est in omnibus sonis atque vocibus, quod habet quasdam Impressiones, & quod metiri possumus Intervallis Equalibus.

'Tis this *Number* that not only prescribes the length of Words, and hinders their exceeding such a quantity of Syllables (as Eight for instance; for none I believe exceed that, and but very few come up to it, because many Words of such a length plac'd together wou'd break the measures of the elevation and depression of the Voice, and consequently the Respiration) this natural *Number*, I say, not only regulates the length of Words, but the extent of our Phrases and Periods likewise. It requires us to comprise a Thought in a certain Quantity of Words and Phrases, that the Lungs may be able to pronounce it without Fatigue, and our Mind comprehend it without Trouble: And this is what all Men do naturally.

Artificial Number consists in a study'd Arrangement of Words and Phrases, in order to compose such Periods, as, by the Cadence of Pronunciation may be more easy and agreeable to the Ear. For 'tis certain, that the more Harmonious any Discourse is, the more easy it is to pronounce, and the more agreeable to hear. A Man cannot speak with Ease, but he will be heard with Pleasure, and whoever undertakes to compose (be it in what *Tongue* soever) shou'd always consult this *Number*. Even our own *Tongue* (tho' very plain and natural in its Construction) is nevertheless susceptible of this; and we may perceive a great deal of difference between the Compositions of Learned Men, and others, in this particular: For tho' we are not allow'd to confuse or reverse the Construction

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struction of our Language, as the *Romans* did theirs; yet there is still a great Art requir'd in the Disposition of our Words, the Connection of our Phrases, and the Turn of our Periods.

I might mention another sort of Number, that arises from a perfect agreement between the Style we write, and the Subject we write upon; a Number, as I said, that the Mind alone is capable to judge of, tho' every is *Tongue* susceptible of it; because there is no Language wherein we cannot speak of little Things in a *simple* Style, of moderate in a moderate, and of great and mighty matters in a pompous and sublime; wherein, in short, we cannot compose, on all the sorts of Subjects, according to the Rules of the most perfect Eloquence.

Experience has long since taught us, that there is no Subject, that does not agree with the *French* Tongue, even to the great Mysteries of Religion; no Science, that may not be taught therein, whether it be Law, Physick, or Divinity; tho' it were better to teach these things in *Latin*, both to keep up a Commerce of Sciences among Learned Men of different Nations, and to oblige Students to draw them from their proper Fountain.

We may then, at last, venture to say, that there is no *Tongue*, wherein may not be found Eloquence enough to make a *Cicero* or *Demosthenes*. Let us but have Genius's answerable to these two great Orators, and we may carry any *Tongue* to as great a perfection as they did *Latin* and *Greek*, because in any *Tongue* may be found that Order, Connection, and Number, that

make up the Beauty of a Language. * *Felicissimus Sermo est, cui & rectus ordo, & apta junctura, & cunius numerus opportunè cadens contingit.*

But to conclude this Question to every one's satisfaction; tho' some Languages, by virtue of their Cadence, may better agree with some sort of Subjects, they will not be found so convenient for others; one has it in Strength, another in Harmony and Sweetness; each has enough to acquit it self with, and none any right to a Superiority.

* *Quint. Lib. 9. Chap. 4.*

C H A P. XVIII.

Of Sublimity or Loftiness.



SUBLIMITTY or *Loftiness* is one of the principal Effects of the *Energy* and *Number* of a *Language*; so that to have prov'd that all *Languages* have their *Number* and *Energy*, is enough, one would think, to shew that they have all likewise their *Sublime*, and that there is nothing in *Eloquence* so magnificent, that may not be attain'd in one *Tongue* as well as another. Or if it be true that the Nobleness of *Thought* is the true Cause of the *Sublimity* of *Stile*, may not Men of all *Languages* have equally great *Thoughts* and *Conceptions*?

But because this *Sublime* is of so great Estimation in *Eloquence*, that some of the most famous *Rhetoricians* of *Antiquity* have thought it worth while to make entire *Treatises* about it, it may not undervalue a Chapter by itself. One of these *Treatises* that has escap'd the Injuries of Time is that of *Longinus*, tho' it be somewhat defective. This excellent Piece has been given us in *French* by an * Author every way capable to compose the *Original*, and one may say that his *Translation* and *Reflections* are enough to convince us that the *Sublime* belongs no more to the *Genius* of particular *Tongues* than particular *Men*.

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* *Sir Boileau Despreaux*

I have several times read over this Work; and how excellent soever it may be, it does not in my Opinion give us any precise Ideas wherein this *Sublime* consists. He tells us indeed in the first Place what are its *Effects*, then what are its *Causes*, and comes at last to give us Examples of the true and false *Sublime*, but in all this it does not appear to me that he determines wherein it consists.

For to say that the *Sublime* is that which constitutes the Excellence and Sovereign Perfection of Discourse --- that which ravishes --- that which transports, and produces in us a certain Admiration mix'd with Wonder and Surprise --- that which elevates the Soul, and makes it conceive a greater Opinion of itself: All these Expressions give us a full Conception of the wonderful *Effects* of it, but they leave us still to seek what is the *Cause* of these *Effects*. They give us to understand, that when we feel ourselves ravish'd and transported with some masterly Strokes in a Discourse, there must be something *Marvellous* in it, but this is not shewing us what the Nature of that *Marvellous* thing is; so that in what *Longinus* has said, he has not sufficiently instructed our Reason, and yet 'tis by the Light of Reason, that we are to become Learned and Wise.

But who dare undertake to supply what is wanting in a Work of so great a Reputation? 'Till some abler Hand than mine shall do it, I hope I may be allow'd to propose my Conjectures, only so far as they may be necessary for the Execution of my Design.

What we call the *Sublime* then I take to be nothing else, but a lively and perfect Imitation
either

either of Nature, or of what surpasses it. The Imitation of Nature is the *Sublime* of Orators, the Imitation of what is above Nature the *Sublime* of Poets; and I shall hereafter have Occasion to shew, why Poetry requires something Divine and Supernatural in it.

As nothing is more grand and admirable than Nature, that which imitates it perfectly, and presents us with lively and resemblant Images, will always appear truly Great and Sublime: And as Nature is not uniform in her Operations, does not always proceed in the same Method, but has sometimes her Prodigies and Miracles; a lively Expression of these Prodigies is that, wherein the *Sublime* and *Marvellous* principally appears.

Herein, as I conceive, does the *Sublime* consist, which produces all the wonderful Effects that *Longinus* speaks of, and this Idea, in my Opinion, agrees exactly with all the Precepts that he hath laid down to attain it. Nay, this Idea is consonant to his own Thoughts of the Matter: For when he says that in the Works of Art we consider the Labour and finishing, but in those of Nature, the *Sublime* and *Wonderful*, he plainly means that the *Sublime* and *Wonderful* in Discourse, is that which rightly represents the *Sublime* and *Wonderful* in Nature, and tho' he here mentions the extraordinary Effects of Nature only, and seems to insinuate that there can be nothing *Sublime* in the Representation of common things, 'tis nevertheless certain, that an excellent Picture even of the most common things, will always touch and ravish the Soul, for what is there in Nature so vile and despicable, that when thoroughly examin'd and truly represented,

does not produce an Admiration mix'd with Astonishment and Surprise? When the Royal Prophet says, *how wonderful are thy Works, O, Lord, in Wisdom hast thou made them all*, he includes therein the Worms of the Earth, the Leaves of the Trees, and the Hairs of our Head, as well as the Elements, the Heavens, and the Plants. God is wonderfull in all things, and the least of his Works cannot be attentively beheld without Astonishment, nor does the *Sublime* of things ordinary and extraordinary in Nature differ, but in the Degree of being more or less so.

Nay even those Passions that have nothing great in them, and are rather Indications of a Littleness and Weakness of Spirit, such as Affliction, Fear, Sadness, &c. may be so well painted and set forth, that the Soul may feel itself as much mov'd and transported thereby, as by the Representation of what we account the greatest Things. Nor is there any Reason to say, there can be nothing *Great* and *Sublime* in a lively Description of the Fright and Astonishment Men will be seiz'd with at the great Solemnity of the last Judgment, and this I verily believe is what *Longinus* intended by these Words, that *Art is never in so high a point of Perfection, as when it resembles Nature so strongly, that it may be taken for Nature itself*.

Now if according to this Notion this *Sublime* be able to produce all the Effects that *Longinus* ascribes to it, it may likewise be taken from those Causes that he remarks: And the first of these is a certain Elevation of Mind that makes us think happily of Things: For in Truth, what is it to think happily of things but to conceive them just as they are, or to speak *Sublimely* of them

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them, but to express them just as we think them.

The Second Cause is the *Pathetick*, that is, as he explains it, that *Enthusian* and Natural Vehemence that moves and affects us, but now no Orator that has receiv'd this Vehemence from the Author of Nature, ever uses it well but when he speaks according to just and Natural Ideas; when he goes beyond these he turns obscure and bombast, and becomes ridiculous.

The Third Cause proceeds from Figures turn'd after a certain manner. Now to turn these Figures well, we must always make them natural, i. e. take them from Objects that have a natural Relation to the Subject we are treating of, otherwise instead of shewing the greatness, they will only discover the littleness of an Imagination.

The Fourth Cause is Nobleness of Expression, but this comes much to the same thing with what I have said before, viz. that if a Man thinks a Thing happily, and expresses it as he thinks it, he cannot but express it Nobly.

The Fifth and principal Cause is in the Composition and Order of Words, in all their Magnificence and Glory, which is the same with *Number* that I have already treated of. But this Composition consists in following the Order, wherein the Thoughts and Ideas we conceive of things are most naturally painted. So that all we can learn from what *Longinus* has told us about Causes of *Sublime* tends only to instruct us in this, that to speak in a great and exalted manner is to represent either Natural or Supernatural Things as beautiful, as great and marvellous as they really are.

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The Examples that he produces, confirm the same Thing. There is not indeed any thing great and magnificent in these Examples, but as they represent Nature in such lively Characters, that one would think it were Nature itself that speaks. The Answer of *Alexander* to *Parmenio* has something very great in it, because it perfectly paints the bold and ambitious Nature of that Prince *Parmenio*, whose Heart had not conceived so great Designs as that of *Alexander*, would have been content to have marry'd *Darius's* Daughter, and had part of *Asia* for her Dower. But *Alexander*, whom the whole World could not satisfy, would not hearken to the Proposal, and his Answer to *Parmenio* could not well have more Grandure in it, because it represents to us, in a very delicate and lively manner, the unbounded Ambition of that Conqueror, for it is in Ambition that the ignorant and corrupted World places all greatness of Soul. *If I were Alexander says Parmenio to him, I would accept of the Offer that Darius makes me, and I too if I were Parmenio, says Alexander.*

The Expressions he quotes from *Homer*, derive their Loftiness from their representing Nature as great as it really is. But the Words of *Moses* are the most stately and magnificent that can be pronounc'd by the Mouth of Man, because they carry a true and most sensible Character of God's Omnipotence, by shewing that his Word was enough to make all Things arise out of nothing, and if *Longinus* had made all the Reflections upon this Expression of *Moses* that it deserv'd, and a Person of his Sagacity should have done, he would not have ascrib'd it to the Invention of this great Legislator; he might have perceiv'd that

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that Man could not have invented such an Expression of himself, and that he must necessarily be inspir'd by the Divine Wisdom to do it. Since if there was requir'd an Infinite Power to give *Fruitfulness* to *Nothing*, and Man having no Natural Conception how *Nothing* could become *Fruitful*, he could not have expressed it so worthily, had not the Being, in whom this Power resides, suggested it. But this is not a Place to shew at large what Knowledge a thinking Man may draw from these Words, *He spoke and all Things were made, he said let there be Light and there was Light.*

These, in my Opinion, are the clearest and most precise Ideas of what we call the *Sublime*, and if they are true in Fact, I can see no Reason why every *Tongue* should not be furnished with proper Materials to draw the most resemblant Pictures of every thing that Nature can produce; of every great and wonderful thing that Men can say or do; nay of every thing that God has revealed to them, either as an Object of their Faith, or a Rule for their Practice. Why, for Example, might not a *Demosthenes* or a *Cicero* Thunder and Lighten in our Language as well as they did in theirs? Why might not *Moses* have spoke in *French* what he did in *Hebrew*, and with the same Dignity and Majesty: Let Men labour the Point as much they please, they will never be able, I believe, to find out any sufficient Reasons why there should be any Difference.

The Admirers of *Greek* and *Latin* perhaps may imagine, that some *Tongues* are not so proper to keep up all this Elevation of Thought, because the Nations that speak them may not have the Hardiness perhaps that the *Greeks* and
Romans

Romans had, to make use of such bold Figures and Expressions, as sometimes transcend the Truth. But if these Nations are more modest in their Stile, their *Sublime* is therefore truer and less liable to become *Bombast*. We, for instance, in this Nation, are not near so hardy, in our manner of Speaking; but our chaste and modest Eloquence is more regular, and should therefore please Men of exquisite Tastes better. For if it be true that our *Tongue* values itself upon its Moderation and Chastity; if it does not love to make use of such Expressions, as please none but Men of irregular Imaginations, and such as are blinded with Self-Conceit, then is it preferable in this Respect both to the *Greek* and *Latin*.

In short, all those that have Taste good enough not to take *Bombast* and Nonsense for *Sublime*, will find, that the *French* will admit of all Sorts of Figures which are contain'd in the Rules of true Eloquence, from whence true Greatness of Expression comes; for therein we treat of such Subjects as require the *Sublime* and *Marvellous* with all imaginable Success. That which constituted the Eloquence of the Pagans, related to Temporal Things only, but Christians have Subjects that has no other Bounds than Eternity, and if it has been said of the Princes of the *Greek* and *Roman* Eloquence, that they storm'd, they thunder'd, they lighten'd, that it was all a consuming Fire, and a Torrent that overwhelm'd every Thing; the same may be said with more Reason and Truth of some of our Preachers, who change *Wolves* into *Lambs*, and *Vulture* into *Doves*, and do greater Wonders by the Power of the Word, than what fabulous Poets have imputed to the Power of their Gods,

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C H A P. XIX.

That all Languages are capable of all sorts of Composition, whether Prose or Verse; with some Observations upon the Latin and French Versification.



Have already shewn that every Language is capable of such Qualities, as make a Discourse clear, neat, intelligible, strong, and E-nergick, or give it a Nobleness and Elevation extraordinary; and may thence conclude that they may all be employ'd in any kind of Composition, whether simple, mean, or sublime, in Prose, or in Verse. This is what Mr. Charpentier has already shewn in regard to the French Tongue, in his Treatise about the Excellency thereof; and the most solid Reasons that he there alledges, are equally applicable to all Tongues in general, as is likewise all that Mr. le Laboureur has said, concerning the advantages of the French Tongue above the Latin, when the Dispute comes to be between Tongue and Tongue, and not between Man and Man.

This Design has in some measure been executed by Mr. Perrault, in his *Parallels between the Moderns and Ancients*; wherein he shews, that the *Moderns*, or rather the *French*, (for 'tis from them that he draws his Comparisons) do equalise the *Greeks* and *Latins* in all Arts and Sciences; that our Philosophers, our Poets, our Orators, our Historians, are not inferior to the most famous among the *Ancients*; and at the same

same time he proves, that the *French* Tongue can supply us with every material, that the Beauty, the Force, and Sublimity of either Eloquence or Poesy, can require.

I shall not therefore stay to speak to what others more able than my self have already treated of; I shall only crave leave to make some Observations on the *Latin* Versification, and our own, without assuming any Authority, but with all submission referring my self to better Judgment.

Messieurs *Le Laboureur*, and *Sleuse* have disputed a great deal about the Structure of the *French* and *Latin* Verse, each labouring to support the *Tongue* that he esteemeth most.

Mr. *le Laboureur* is for the *French*, and Mr. *Sleuse* for the *Latin* Versification, the one likes Rhime, and the other the Cadence of long and short Syllables: But 'tis but making Rhim'd Verses in *Latin*, and Unrhim'd measur'd Verses, or Rhim'd and Measur'd both in *French*, and a great part of the reasons of their Dispute will vanish, and no preference be found between the two Languages on that account.

But to go to the Bottom of their Dispute, I am of Opinion that both these Kinds of Versification are faulty, in that they have too much apparent Art in their Composition. For, first of all this Art cramps Men of Wit, and runs them into such Licenses, as Reason wou'd never excuse, were it not for this restraint; for what reason can there be for establishing such Rules, as oblige us to break the most essential, and consequently the most inviolable, Rules of Speech? And after all, this visible and affected Art does but disgust in the end, being a Repast
made

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made up of *Ragoûts* and high favour'd Sauces, for which reason, Men of Gravity and good Sense cannot be brought to spend as much Time in reading of Poetry, as they do Prose.

We may therefore blame the *Romans* for the Invention of their long and short Syllables, since they cannot be placed in the Composition of Verse, without transgressing the Rules of Grammar. These are call'd *Poetick Licenses* indeed, but they have no Countenance from Reason; for what Reason can there be, for crowding a Discourse with such Words, as no ways conduce to its Sense, and, for this Cause, cannot but give Offence, because they destroy the *neatness* of it. They are like pieces in a Machine, which, when of no Service to the Movement, cannot but retard it. What I am speaking of are those Epithites, which are frequently of no other use in Verse, than to lengthen it; we have Magazines of such Words, to furnish us, according to the matter in hand, with Implications to fill up the measure of our Verse; nor do I know a better Secret to teach us to compose without Judgment, or any thing that less becoming serious and sensible Writers, than such Pieces as these: Upon the whole, I know not a more frivolous amuzement than this ranging of Words, and observing of long, short, and middle Syllables, for *Aulus Gellius* talks of *middle* Syllables, which are those, I suppose; that Grammarians dispute the Quantity of.

Nature, whose simplicity we cannot too much study and admire, loves no such Restraints as these: It wou'd walk free, not jumping and bounding, like the manag'd Horse, nor
mov'd

mov'd with Springs, like Machines: It wou'd exprefs it felf with eafe and uniformity, without obferving fo very exactly the Length of Syllables, ever in Verfe; and if Verfe on all hands is allow'd to be more meafur'd, much lefs can fuch Reftraint be becoming in Profe.

Whether the *Romans* were fcrupulous Obfervers of fuch meafures in their common Difcourfe, I cannot tell, but it feems to me, that this affectation did not well comport with Perfons of their Gravity: They might have better left thefe little matters to the *Grecians*, and continued within the bounds of their Character, applying themfelves to the Solidity of Things, and not the Cadency of Words.

The fame Fault that has been found with the *Romans* for their meafure may be found with the *French* for their Rhime; a Childifh Art, that at laft wearies the Ear, by perpetually ftriking upon it with the fame found; and tho' we are much more ftrict in our manner of Verfifying, yet thefe Rhimes often times make us give our Thoughts and Expreffions another Turn, than what is Natural, and fometimes we may perceive that the latter Words of the Verfe are taken in rather for the Rhime, than the Senfe; fo that thefe Rhimes have the fame effect upon the Juftice of Composition, that the 'foremention'd *Epithites* have.

I may be deceiv'd, but in my Opinion, our Verfe wou'd have much more Beauty, more Grandure, and more Majesty in it, if Rhimes were laid afide; and I have a long while thought that they are the chief Caufe why *Epick Poems* have not fo well fucceeded in our Tongue: For tho' there is more good Senfe and Juftice in them,

them, than in what the *Greeks* and *Romans* wrote, yet this continual Juggle diminishes the weight and grandure of the Subjects that these sort of Poems treat of; for 'tis trifling with Words, while one shou'd be wholly employ'd about the greatness of Things.

It may be said indeed that I am here imputing to Poetry, what is properly the Fault of bad Poets, and that among good Poets, whether *Latin* or *French*, there are not these Words to be found, of no other Use than to Rhime, or fill up the Measure of the Verse. Happy are those Poets, where Reason governs the Use of Rhimes and Epithets ! but I cannot tell, whether the greatest Admirers of *Homer*, *Horace*, and *Virgil*, will venture to maintain, that there are no Botches in their Verses, nor any Word that may be taken away without diminishing the Strength and Greatness of their Thought ; and if our *French* Poets are more chaste, if our Poetry cannot bear a Word, that is taken in for Rhime-sake only, then it is plain that there are abundance of Words whose Rhime is their principal Merit. Versification as well as Poetry, takes its Origin from the Scripture, and the first Poems that were found therein, were the Models upon which the first *Pagan* Poets form'd themselves, as I shall elsewhere shew. As these Poems were nothing but Songs, they gave them Measures proper to be sung ; nor can I think that they were solicitous for any other Nicety in point of Cadence, but what made them agree with the Strength of their Lungs, and the Inflection of their Voice : And we perhaps would do better to imitate them in this Simplicity, than to perplex ourselves with all those Rules that

Men of much Leisure have with great Application and Study invented. There would be then quite another kind of Variety, in the Number of our Verse, and another Elevation in our Thoughts, if the Mind were not straiten'd, and, as it were, entangled in a Net, by a Multitude of these trifling Rules.

These are the Sentiments that occur to me, about the matter of Versification, and I submit them to the Judgment of Men of good Taste, being ready to retract them if they are not found consonant to Reason and good Sense, the only Directors we are to submit to.



CHAP. XX.

Some Causes of our excessive Esteem for the Latin and Greek, and Contempt of Living Tongues.

I have in my Opinion sufficiently shew'd, in what I have already advanc'd that *Tongues* consider'd in themselves, and according to their Nature, have nothing that makes one preferable to another, and that in any one of them, a Man may speak with all the Beauty, Force, and Grandure of the most judicious and exquisite Eloquence. If we have been accusom'd to other Sentiments, and so train'd up in the Course of our Studies, it must be the Effect of what the Masters, that had the Care of our Education, prepossess'd us with.

'Tis certain that in our younger Days we had nothing so much peal'd in our Ears as the great Value of such *Tongues* as are taught us at Schools. Our Masters are perpetually crying up their Beauty, Grace, and Energy, and seem to make it their whole Endeavours to impress upon our Memories the fine Passages of the Authors they teach, insomuch, that our whole Youth is spent in a continu'd Admiration of these *Tongues*, without ever hearing any Thing to the Praise and Advantage of our own. Nor are they content with saying nothing of it, but are always running on in the Commendation of other *Tongues*, in prejudice of ours, and incessantly telling us, that the beautiful Passages of *Greek* and *Latin* Authors cannot have the same Grace,

Force and Delicacy in any other *Tongue*. And now after such Prejudices as these, so seasonably infus'd, and so industriously improv'd, who could believe any other, but that the *French* is inferior to them ?

The proper way however to try this, would be to establish Masters for teaching *French* People *French* in the same manner that the *Romans* taught their own *Tongue*, and we shall then soon see the *French* in an equal Degree of Honour with those *Tongues* that are most priz'd. These Masters would lay out their Endeavours to understand it perfectly, in order to teach it well ; their own Interest too would engage them to procure its Esteem, and ascertain its Advantages ; so that in a short time we should accustom ourselves to do it Justice, and account it not inferior either to *Latin* or *Greek*. The same thing might be done in all *Vulgar* or *Natural* Languages, as *Italian*, *Spanish*, and the rest, and by this means as high an Esteem obtain'd for them, as we pay to those that we learn at *Schools*.

A second Cause of the great Respect we have for the *Greek* and *Latin* *Tongues* is their Antiquity. Every thing that is ancient, even to old Trees and old Houses, begets a Veneration, and there is a great deal of Reason for this Disposition in us, as it proceeds from a very allowable Prejudice, that seems to be implanted in human Nature, viz. That Truth is the ancientest of all Things. This Sentiment made *Aristotle* say, that whatever was very old, was very deserving of Respect : The *Romans* when they were minded to enhance the Merit of any thing, had a certain way of comparing it to what was ancient, and
how

how much we value *Antiques* merely because they are so, is sufficiently known.

But how just soever this Prejudice may be, it has nevertheless its Bounds, and should not be apply'd to all sorts of matters. The *Heathens* abus'd it, when they carry'd it so far as even to pay Religious Worship to old Oaks in the Forest, it should be restrain'd to what has relation to Truth.

In regard to the Truth of Religion then, and the Sanctity of Men's Manners, Antiquity is always preferable to the present Age, but in the matter of Tongues and Sciences, we ought to reason quite otherwise. Mankind at this time are older than they ever were, and should therefore be suppos'd to speak and think better than they ever did, and tho' we must have Recourse to Antiquity for Religion and Morality, 'tis in this latter Age on the contrary, that we must expect to find the Perfection of *Languages* and *Sciences*. If God in all Ages had those that ador'd him and preserv'd his true Worship among a certain Race of Men, he did not take that Care about Arts and Sciences, but suffer'd them to be lost by Men that were carry'd away with their Passions, or taken up with the Necessaries and Exigencies of Life; and when they were once lost, they neither were, nor could be recover'd, without much Labour; so that *Sciences* were more and more perfected and enlarged by Time: And if Time was requir'd to make them perfect, then should our Modern *Languages* have some Advantages that the Ancient had not; but to cut short the Controversy, we'll suppose them to be equal.

The Prejudice of Antiquity has nothing then to do with *Tongues*, so long as they are old enough to have receiv'd all the Improvement, all the Politeness, Beauty, and Strength, that may properly belong to them.

A third Cause of the great Veneration we have for *Greek* and *Latin* arises from hence, that in learning these *Tongues* we are acquainted with none but the finest *Genius* of the *Greek* and *Roman* Antiquity. Their Philosophers, their Poets, their Orators and Historians, are the only Men we are always reading, and the Esteem we have for these great Men insensibly occasions One for the Tongue wherein they wrote ; or (to speak otherwise) our Respect for the Authors redounds upon the Tongue itself, and brings us in time to the Habit of thinking, that they could not have wrote so many fine Things in any other Tongue whatever. Thus *Tongues* become confounded with Authors, and those that take part with the *Ancients* against the *Moderns*, do equally take part with the *Dead* against *Living Tongues*.

A Fourth Cause of this Preference is, that whenever we speak or write in these *Tongues*, 'tis always about points of Learning and to learned Men, by which Means they come to be accounted properly the Languages of Sciences ; nor can we easily bring ourselves to believe that 'tis possible to express them so well as in *Greek* and *Latin*.

And if these Circumstances tend to raise in our Minds a great Opinion of these *Tongues*, the contrary Circumstances contribute not a little to debase our own. We learn it from our Nurses ; which are ignorant and unpolish'd Creatures ; we daily speak it with all sorts of People, Tradesmen, and Peasants, and almost always about
common,

common, sometimes very mean and contemptible Matters, (tho' at present it is a little more employ'd in the Commerce of *Sciences*) and if so, how can it well be, that a *Tongue* which is employ'd in common by Men of the lowest Parts, and on the meanest Subjects, should have that Place in our Esteem, with those that are dignify'd and distinguish'd by such exalted Usage?

The Fifth Cause of this Preference is, the great Reputation that the Knowledge of these *Tongues* brings in to those that are acquainted with them. What a Noise do the Criticks make in the learned World? Who, in their Opinion, is able to teach the Ancients any thing, to read Lessons to *Aristotle* for *Greek*, or *Titus Livy* for *Latin*? But on the other hand, let a Man speak his own *Tongue* as well as ever *Cicero* spoke, yet he will not have a bit the more Esteem or Reputation for it. And how then can it otherwise be, but that Languages which may acquire Men such Renown, should be vastly prefer'd before others?

The Sixth Prejudice so favourable to dead *Tongues* is, the manifest Advantage we find in writing in one Language above another. There are an infinite Number of Thoughts and Arguments that pass well enough in *Latin*, which would be intolerable in *French*. The very shadow of the Terms and Expressions of *Cicero*, of *Virgil*, and the other great Authors we admire, makes that pass upon us for good in its kind, that has neither Justness nor Solidity in it, whereas if the Thing were once stripp'd of its venerable Phrases of Antiquity, we should see it in its real Poverty, because we should see it nearer,

and judge of it better : For strange Languages do some way or other remove Things from our Understanding. How many *Latin* Discourses are there that have been receiv'd with the utmost Applause, and yet if they were translated even by one of our best Pens, would move our Compassion for those that admir'd them ? So that it is manifestly in point of Interest, that many give the Preference to *Latin*. And what I may add as a

Seventh Cause is, the Arguments of Criticks upon this Matter. If Men have given Names to every Age, according to the Things they were most addicted to, this may justly be call'd the *Age of Criticism*, because Men have carry'd on this sort of Erudition so far, that there is scarce an Author that they have not turn'd and turn'd again, almost in every Word and Phrase, into all manner of Meanings. Now this Application, warming the Imagination, cannot fail of enlarging Objects mightily, and shewing us such Mysteries as the Authors themselves never intended : Whereas our own Writers are plain and easy, they may be understood without much Application, and for this Reason we cannot fancy that there are all those excellent Graces and Refinements in them that we think we perceive in *Latin* and *Greek*, and so are led on course to conclude, that the one surpasses the other.

It would be no hard matter however to shew that these Gentlemen the Criticks are neither so great Oracles, nor their Knowledge in the *Greek* and *Latin* Tongues so certain as they imagine, for the Proof of which I need but mention their frequent Disputes about the Purity of *Latin*, and the Stile of Authors. *Linsius* said of Cardinal *Bembo*, who pretended to take every Term from

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Ticero, that he many Times did not speak *Latin*, so that either *Bembo* or *Cicero* did not well understand what *Latin* and their *Cicero* was. Many Instances of the like Nature might be produc'd if this were a proper Place, but a small Reading will convince any Man of their diversity of Opinions in this regard, and how common a Thing it is for one to spy Faults in that, which, in the Opinion of others, has been most admirably wrote. So that the Art of *Criticism* is at the best but Conjectural, and perhaps the worst supported of any Conjectural Science whatever.



C H A P. XXI.

That the Reasons for preferring the Ancients to the Moderns are not so solid as we imagine.



Have above observ'd that those who take part with the *Dead* against *Living* Tongues, do likewise take part with the *Ancients* against the *Moderns*, and that these Sentiments mutually produce each other. It may not therefore be improper to my Purpose, to say something concerning the famous Controversy that happen'd some Years ago, between two illustrious Authors, about the matter of Comparison between the *Ancients* and *Moderns*.

M. Perrault maintains the Cause of the *Moderns* against the *Ancients*, and pretends that the former surpass them a great deal, not only in Arts and Sciences, but in Compositions of Wit and

and Ingenuity. And certainly when we come to make a Comparison between the most excellent Pieces of Antiquity, whether in Eloquence or Philosophy (for these are the chief Topicks of Dispute) with the Works of some of our *Moderns*, we can hardly forbear from being of his Opinion : Tho' we may not be entirely satisfy'd with the Arguments he deduces with so much Moderation, that even while he is testifying what Esteem the *Moderns* merit, he preserves at the same time all due Respect to the *Ancients* ; for these two Points are not incompatible.

M. Despreaux, without ever considering that he himself is one, that has the greatest share in the glory of the *Moderns*, is so far from suffering them to be preferr'd before the *Ancients*, that he even wonders how they dare pretend to equal them. He is, without all doubt, commendable for his Humility, for one can perceive no other Reason why he took the part he did, but the Fear his Modesty had lest he should be pre-err'd before the *Ancients*, since he has never yet vouchsafed us a formal Answer to what *M. Perrault* has advanc'd.

What he chiefly does is to despise those of a contrary Sentiment, as Men without Learning or Taste : If he says any thing it is but cursorily, and what shews that himself had Anger rather than Reason on his side, and that his Purpose was, more to harraß his Adversary about the signification of some *Greek Word*, than to come to any regular Combat with him.

If so mean an Author as I may be allow'd to add any thing to what *M. Perrault* has said upon this subject, these Observations I conceive, may
not

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not be inconducable to the support of his Opinion.

1. 'Tis not to be disputed but that several of the best Pieces of Antiquity, when translated into our *Tongue*, and by some of our ablest Pens, have neither that Grace, Justness, nor Strength, that may be found in many of our Modern Works; and the only Refuge which the Admirers of the *Ancients* have, at least what I have heard from their own Mouths, is this, that we cannot render in our *Tongue* the Thoughts that are most delicate, most sublime, and exquisite in these excellent Originals. But this is only amusing us with fine Words, and nothing is easier than to prove the contrary; and to this purpose we must distinguish two sorts of Beauty in Works of Wit and Ingenuity, that which arises from the Thought or Thing, and that which proceeds from the Style or Expression. As to *Thoughts*, 'tis not to be disputed, but that other Men can conceive them as true, as just, as beautiful, and as noble as *Plato*, or any of the greatest Men of Antiquity ever did; for, in short, how can we think but that the Minds of the Men of this Age have the same Force and Sublimity that they formerly had? A Pretence contrary to this is destitute of all appearance of Reason, since to maintain that our Conceptions cannot come up to those of the *Ancients*, we must first of all comprehend what the Extent and Height of their Thoughts were, and when we have once comprehended them, why may we not express them? Why may we not in our own or any other *Tongue*, say every thing we perceive beautiful in *Plato* or others; but if we perceive or comprehend it not, we speak of what we do not understand,

understand, *i. e.* we exalt the *Ancients* above the *Moderns*, or Reasons purely imaginary, and for Beauties that we can give no Notion of.

2. If it be plain and undeniable that the Truths which constitute the Beauty and Strength of Thoughts, are in themselves indifferent, in what Language, Terms or Expressions they are deliver'd, provided they appear to be such as they really are, (since they have no more affinity to one Sound and Character than they have to others) what Reason can there be given why an able Translator may not render in his own *Tongue* all the real and substantial Beauties, that are found in any *Greek* or *Latin* Authors?

This we may say, that the matter stands so with Truth, as it does with the Soul that conceives it; they both are equally spiritual, and equally indifferent to what Body they are united; and as it is of no Consequence to the Soul in what Body it resides, whether in *Greek*, *Roman*, or *French*, black or white, short or tall, so long as it is serviceable to the Exercise of its Faculties; so is it of no Consequence to Truth, with what Sounds and Characters it is cloath'd, provided it appears what it really is.

'Tis nothing therefore but pure Illusion to pretend, that what are real Beauties in the *Ancients*, may not pass into any other *Tongue*, since this would be a confining of Truth to certain Sounds and Characters, which is a thing that Reason will never admit of. But as there is no disputing the Possibility of the Thing, and some perhaps may come to Fact, and say, that there are not actually those Beauties in Translations, it must then be the fault of the Translator, and not of the *Tongue*.

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3. As for those Graces, which in Language depend upon certain Turns and Figures, that lie merely in the Words, they are of no great Moment, and deserve our Consideration and Esteem no more than does the Gold and Silver wherein precious stones are set; and such as admire these minute Things, give me reason to believe, that they have not a due Estimation for what are the real Beauties of a Discourse.

But if in our Tongue there are not always found proper Terms and Expressions to represent the external Graces of every Passage (as well as those of the Thought) in a *Greek* or *Latin* Performance (because we must allow, that there are sometimes certain happy Incidents of Words and Expressions, which give an *Eclat* to the Thought, but do not always occur in a different Language upon the same Subject.) Yet in ballance to this, it may be said, that there are many happy Expressions devis'd in our Tongue, that are not to be found in the *Original*, and so if a Performance on one hand, loses any part of its Beauty in the Version, it is abundantly recompenc'd on the other, by other Beauties it finds in the *New Tongue*, that were not to be found in the *Old*.

This Remark will hold good with a great Number of excellent Versions, that have appear'd in our Days; and what a great Writer says of the Version of *Josephus*, by the late M. d'Andilly, confirms the point. That Translator, says he, has so employ'd the Advantages of our Tongue, that he has found the way of expressing almost all the Beauties of the *Greek*; where some Ornaments were wanting in the *French*, he hath substituted others that the *Greek* had not, so that *Josephus* has lost
nothing

nothing by the Change : And yet notwithstanding this, he has given us the Sense of the Greek Text very faithfully, and hath made use of so just Expressions, that tho' they do not always signify precisely what the Historian says, they always explain perfectly what he would say.

The like thing may be said of several other Translations, and if those of M. Dubois do not always in the same Place render Beauty for Beauty, yet in other Places he adds such as surpass those of the Original, and make his Translations even of Cicero himself, as estimable as Originals. And in like manner if M. d'Albancourt has not preserv'd the Spirit of *Lucian* throughout, he has however, in some Places, given him a Spirit and Delicacy, that he never had, and I am verily perswaded, that if *Lucian* were to appear in the World again, and speak French, he could not do it better than d'Albancourt has done it for him.

That therefore we may judge right of the merit of a Translation, and make a just Comparison between it and the Original, we should not compare them by Pieces, but the whole of them together ; and if it be done by an able hand, we shall find the Copy not inferior, nay it will have the Air and Character of an Original Piece, when the Translator is perceiv'd to write under no Constraint, but with the same Ease and Liberty that the Author did.

But to make us comprehend the Truth of what I say, viz. That Books may be as beautiful both in Thought and Expression, in any Tongue they are translated into, as they were in their Original, let us suppose that some of these great Persons of Antiquity, Cicero for instance, were
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to return into the World, with all their Wit, Knowledge, and Eloquence, both natural and acquir'd, but instead of being born a *Roman*, should become a *Frenchman*, and understand the *French* Language as well as he did the *Latin*; yet who will venture to say that this *French Cicero* could not compose in our Tongue with the same Success that he did in *Latin*, and that his *French* Pieces would not be as estimable, as those that gain'd him the first Rank among Orators. There is no Reason for such Assertion, and therefore we may conclude, that whatever makes the true Merit of any ancient Performance, whether in Wit, Learning, or Eloquence, may be convey'd in our Tongue as well as those of an older date; and consequently if the best of their Pieces, translated by the best of our Writers, when compar'd with some modern Compositions, lose all their Lustre, and appear but dull, 'tis in reality because they have less Justness and Solidity, less Beauty and true Grandure, than are in the other.

I have read some of their Pieces, such as *Demosthenes*, *Plato*, and *Cicero*, as they are translated by Mr. *Mamroy*, but could never find in them all that dazzling Brightness, that Thunder and Lightning that bears all before it; and, in short, that inimitable Sublime that they make such loud boasts of. If they are good and excellent in their kind, 'tis carrying the Compliment too far to say that they may not be equall'd, or even surpass'd, and perhaps we might have thought them better, if so much had not been said in their Commendation.

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The Orations of *Demosthenes* and *Cicero* are therefore thought their Top Performances, because they contain a great deal of Vehemence and Sublimity, are full of Fire and Indignation, and animated with such Passions, as give a Vivacity to Discourse. They might indeed be quite another thing when spoke by these two great Orators, whose Pronunciation we are assur'd was admirable, but we ought to remember, that we are here speaking of the Eloquence of the Pieces themselves, and not the Persons.

In the *Philippicks* of *Demosthenes* we find a great Knowledge of the true Maxims of Policy, therein he detects all *Philip's* Artifices, and shews the means how to defeat them; he gives, in short, the *Athenians* the best Counsel imaginable, for the Preservation of their Liberty, and uses the most powerful Motives to engage them to it; but after all, I cannot perceive those wonderful Figures, and Flights extraordinary, that make it pass for an inimitable Model of the most *Pathetic* and *Sublime* Eloquence; nor can we say as *Longinus* did, without some sort of Hyperbole, that 'twas easier to see a Thunderbolt come down from the Heavens with a fix'd and undaunted Look, than not to be mov'd when he spoke.

If at this Day Assemblies were held of all the States of *Europe*, wherein all the present Affairs might be debated, and the true Interest of every Sovereign fairly laid before him, I make no doubt but that we might have Speeches compos'd that would not only equal those of *Demosthenes*, but perhaps very much surpass them.

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The Orations of *Cicero* against *Verres* are not so finish'd a Work, but almost any of our *Modern* Compositions may compare with them, and how many are there that excel them? What is said of this great Orator, viz. *That his Works might be retrench'd*, is true; for the one half of this Piece might be cut off, without the Loss of any thing necessary. His Business was to implead *Verres*, for his Violences and Oppressions, and give a Report of the Informations that had been drawn up against him; so that this was one of the greatest and most serious Subjects that an Orator could handle: But instead of this, *Cicero* amuses himself with making Descriptions and Histories of some little Pieces of Sculpture and Painting that *Verres* had taken from the *Sicilians*, and gives a tedious Account of the Situation and Beauty of the City *Syracuse*, and of certain Persons, when perhaps there was not one in the Audience who had not been at the City, and knew it as well as he, considering its small distance from *Rome*.

All these Episodes neither agreed with the Majesty of the Place where he spoke, nor with the Dignity of his own Person, nor with the Gravity of his Subject; but he lov'd to speak, and those that are willing to admire every thing in the Ancients, find something to praise him for, even in his Ramblings. But to speak impartially, *Cicero* has not observ'd what was fitting for him to say, and strangely transgress'd against what we call *Decorum*, by this mix'd variety of things, whereby he thought to have embellish'd that piece. The Subject was too important and melancholly for a Man to think of diverting either himself or his Hearers, where nothing

should have reign'd but Indignation against the Crime, and Compassion for the Criminal, all Mirth is there unbecoming. If he was afraid to weary his Auditory with the length of his Piece, he might easily have made it shorter, without omitting any thing material, either in Fact or Law, instead of amusing himself with idle Tales to divert the Assembly; he might have thought, that how good a Speaker soever a Man may be, yet he never speaks well, that speaks from the Purpose, as he himself has it in some Places. *Quintilian* will by no means allow, that a Discourse upon an extensive Subject, should be lengthen'd with Stories and far fetch'd Descriptions. * *Non sit Oratio sinuosa, neque accersitis Descriptionibus lasciva*, and *St. Austin* is of Opinion, that whatever is said without Reason, can never savour of Elegance, *non mihi sonat diserte, quod dicitur inepte*.

There are many other Faults against *Decency* that one might remark in this Piece; he does not only accuse *Verres*, but he insults and reviles him, and the strokes of his Eloquence shew his Personal Hatred against *Verres*, more than his Love of Justice. The truth is, there appears so much Passion in his Declamations against *Piso*, *Catiline*, *Claudius*, *Verres*, and *Anthony*, that it impairs the Credit of what he says; his Passion so strongly rules him, that he suffers himself to be thereby transported, even when his Subject admitted of no Investives; as it happens to him in two or three of his *Paradoxes*, where the matter requir'd cool Blood, and should be treated

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treated in a plain and close Stile as the *Stoicks* did. And all these Faults of his, are certainly repugnant to the Rules of true Eloquence.

Plato's Dialogues has a great deal of Wit and Loftiness in them. The Justness and Facility whereof appears in the manner, whereby he leads Men into Truth. He recalls the Mind of his Disciple, when it wanders either to the Right Hand or the Left, with plain and easy, but solid and judicious Questions; and thereby makes it enter into the Paths of Knowledge: But as soon as he has made it enter, he does not conduct it far, and almost always leaves it without any perfect instructions in that Truth, which it searches after.

In his *Eutipbron*, he dissipates the false Ideas, that Men form to themselves, about what is *Holy* and *Profane*; but he does not proceed to give us just Notions of them: So that he either leaves his Reader in the dark, or the Lights that he gives him are so very faint, that they are not capable of leading him very far.

In his *Hippias*, he does in a manner the same Thing. We might in that Book expect to find an exact Idea of that which constitutes what we call *Beautiful*, and yet a great many things might be added to what he says. What is agreeable contributes to Beauty, but it does not entirely compleat it; for how many Things are there, that have all that is agreeable to their Nature, and yet are not beautiful, or that may become more beautiful than they are? If there is not more Wit in many of the Discourses of Philosophers in our Days, there is certainly more good Sense and Knowledge. I speak of Philosophers that are truly Christian, for 'tis Knowledge and

a sound and solid Knowledge, that we ought to look for from Philolophers.

Whether the Reading these Authors has had the same Effect upon others as it has upon me, I cannot tell ; but after I had read them I was periwaded, that the Translator was none of those that prefer'd the *Ancients* to the *Moderns*. He thought that the easiest way to end the Dispute, would be to bring the *Ancients* as near the *Moderns* as possible, by making their Works appear in our *Tongue*, to the end that we might more easily make the Comparison, and judge of 'em with better Knowledge, and consequently with more Equity.

For, in short, 'tis almost impossible to make just Comparisons between *Greek* and *Latin* Pieces and those of our own Composition. A Man must have another Turn of Thought to understand perfectly, wherein the Excellency of these Pieces consists, from what he must have to know a *French* Composition. In one Case, the Mind must have two Objects to consider, the Things and the Language: In the other his Attention is not divided, but is altogether taken up with the Things. Now this difference of Attention, cannot fail of making the Ballance lean one way or another: Those that account easy things not so beautiful, will be for *Greek* and *Latin* for this very Reason, because they understand them not so well, and others for contrary Reasons will be against them ; whereas if the Pieces under Comparison be both in the same *Tongue*, there will then be but one Difficulty on both Sides, and we shall be able to comprehend the Design, the Order and Oeconomy of a Discourse, the Justness and Solidity of its Arguments, and the

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the Grandure and Sublimity of its Thought much better. As to the Stile, I have already shewn, that *Greek* and *Latin* Compositions lose nothing in that regard, when they are translated by able Hands.

This is by much the easiest way to judge of both, and when the Matter is thus order'd, it can hardly be thought, but that our Judgment should favour the *Moderns*. M. *Maucroix* has manag'd dexterously enough, in deciding the Question to the Advantage of the *Moderns*, without exposing himself to the ill humour of those, that admire the *Ancients*; and M. *Despreaux*, with all his Learning and Ingenuity, will never be able to rescue the *Ancients* from the Prejudice they suffer by the Comparison; for the more Wise he has and the better he writes, the more he exposes the Weakness of his Party.

In short the Criticism of a *Greek* or *Latin* Word is not the point in Debate, nor is such Criticism of any other use, than to throw Things into Obscurity and Confusion, and to hinder us from seeing them clearly as they are; if we would dispute in earnest, we must oppose Principle to Principle, and Argument to Argument, without laying such stress upon Grammatical Niceties: And if M. *Despreaux* would translate us some more of *Plato's* Dialogues, besides these already mention'd, and annex some learned Dissertations to shew us the particular Beauties of them, perhaps it might be a better expedient to support his Cause.

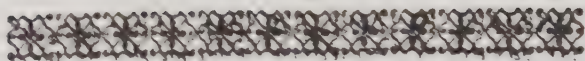
M. *Bruyere's* Design in his Version of the Characters of *Theophrastus*, was the same in my Opinion with that of M. *Maucroix*: He has plac'd them at the Head of his, the better to make us

perceive the Difference : But in Truth, if *Theophrastus* has done his best in drawing the ridiculous part of some of the *Athenians*, 'twill be hard to make us believe, that the *Attick* Eloquence was what they would persuade us. His ridiculous Characters are too rustick and immodest, to make us believe that his polite and fine Characters should be so excellent ; for how should such opposite Extreame be found among the same People, and in the same Country ? But after all, if the Question about the Point of Preference between the *Ancients* and *Moderns* should still remain doubtful, yet to determine it, there is this to be said, that the Knowledge of the *Moderns* being quite different to that of the *Ancients*, they cannot but write with more Justness, Solidity and Loftiness than the *Ancients* did. For tho' we should not exceed the *Ancients* in all Arts and Sciences (which is a Point hardly to be contested, since the *Ancients* are in nothing superior to the *Moderns*, but in being the first Collectors and Improvers of the Remains of the old Traditions of Mankind) tho' we should not I say, have a better Knowledge of Humane Sciences than the *Ancients* had, yet the Light of the Gospel alone, shining forth and discovering to us without Clouds or Obscurity, those Truths which the *Ancients* saw, as it were, in a Dream, and in a very wavering and uncertain Manner ; cannot but communicate to our Compositions, many real and substantial Beauties, that are not to be found among the *Ancients* : And I have often wonder'd that *M. Perrault* has not made mention of this Reason, which is so very clear and decisive.

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We may therefore be allow'd to apply to ourselves, and to those that shall come after us, that Saying of *Quintilian*; *That no Age is more happy than ours, since all that have preceded it, seem to have labour'd only to make ours more refin'd and knowing.* So that were the *Ancients* to come into the World again, they would certainly be surpriz'd to see us place them in so high a Degree of Honour, considering the Learning and Experience which Mankind has acquir'd, since the Times wherein they liv'd. This verifies the Proverb in the Gospel, *That a Prophet is best honour'd out of his own Kindred and Country,* and what I have said is enough to shew, that our preferring the *Ancient* before the *Modern,* and *dead* before *living* Tongues, proceeds from the same Prejudice, and has no better Foundation.

* *Lib. 12. Ch. 10.*



C H A P. XXII.

Of the ENGLISH Tongue. Its Advantages ; Its Defects ; and what Improvements it is capable of.



HAT our Author has all along made an Example to the Rules and Principles he lays down, is only the *French Tongue*; which, how applicable soever to his Purpose, cannot afford all the Satisfaction to an *English Reader*, that may be expected. He possibly may desire a nearer Application of these Rules; and, among the great Number of Languages, that are extant in the World, may be ambitious to know in what point of Light his *own* stands; what Progress it has already made; what Defects lie still upon it, and what further Degrees of Improvement it is susceptible of.

Now, since Words are nothing else but the *Signs* of our Thoughts, the first great Requisite in any Language must be, to have a sufficient Number of these Signs, whereby to express our Minds. Let us then see how it stands with our *English Tongue*, in relation to what we call its *Riches*, or *Copiousness*.

I. The old *British*, or what we now call *Welsh*, (tho' no barren Language in it self) had a considerable Accession made to it, when this *Island* became a Province to *Rome*. The *Latin Tongue*,

Tongue, * however was never in its full Purity here : For, as few or no Attempts towards a Conquest were made until the Time of *Cladius*, so, in Process of Time, the *Roman* Legions, which were settled here, were all recall'd to help their Country against the *Goths*, and other barbarous Invaders. The Laws of the State, and the Ceremonies of Religion however being in *Latin*, (especially where their Arms prevail'd) occasioned a great Intermixture, tho' some of the *Natives* were so brave, as to preserve both their Liberties and Language entire.

After the Departure of the *Roman* Forces, the *Britons*, left to shift for themselves, and daily harass'd by cruel Inroads from the *Picts*, were forced to call in the *Saxons* for their Defence. The *Saxons* were not long in the Land, before they affected the Conquest of it, and happily perform'd what the *Romans* were never able to do. The greatest Part of it they reduc'd to their own Power; drove the *Britons* into the most remote and mountainous Parts; and the rest of the Country was oblig'd to submit to their Customs, both Religious and Civil, as well as their Language; which, (excepting some few Variations that Time has occasioned in the *Orthography*,) is the very same, in most *Original* Words, with our present *English*, and, consequently the very Foundation of what we now speak. The *Danish* Conquest was of no long Continuance; it lasted but a few Reigns: But

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* *Vid.* *Cambden's Remains*, and *Swift's Letter to the Lord High Treasurer*.

it left behind it some Remains of its Language (Words of a peculiar Force and Energy) as well as Monuments of its Severity. The *Norman* Conquest had a more permanent Effect: It altered, in a great measure, the whole Body of our Laws; impos'd upon our Ancestors, for some time, a strange Language with Rigour; and left behind it a multitude of Terms, both Civil and Military, in Law, and other Sciences, which, for their great Propriety, are still retain'd.

Edward the Confessor indeed, having liv'd long in *France*, seems to be the first, who introduc'd any Mixture of the *French* Tongue into the *Saxon*, the Court affecting what the Prince was fond of, and others taking it up as a fashionable Accomplishment; but *William the Conqueror* proceeded much farther. He brought over with him vast Numbers of that Nation, gave them great Quantities of Land; directed all Pleadings to be in that Language, and endeavour'd, to his utmost, to make it Universal in the Kingdom. Nay, even after the Restoration of the *Saxon* Line, the *French* Tongue made still a farther Progress in the Reign of *Henry the Second*, who, having large Territories in that Continent both from his Father and his Wife, made frequent Journeys and Expeditions there, and was always attended with a Number of his Countrymen, Retainers at Court. For some Centuries after, there was a constant Interchange between *France* and *England*, by the Dominions we possess'd there, and the Conquests we made; so that our Language (between two or three hundred Years ago) seems to have had a greater Mixture

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ture with the *French* than at present: many Words having been afterwards rejected, and some, since the Time of *Spencer*; tho' we have still retained not a few, which have been long antiquated in *France*.

From this short Account it plainly appears, what great Additions and Improvements, at least in Point of Copiousness, our Language must have received, when our very Conquerors contributed to our Riches in this respect, and every Revolution in the State has been no small Accession to our Tongue. How much soever then we may lament the Fate of our Forefathers, who liv'd in the Time of these Revolutions, when Customs, and Laws, and Languages, were forc'd upon them by the Dint of the Sword; yet we have this peculiarly to be thankful for, that the Nations, who have successively rul'd over us, have severally contributed their Stores to furnish us with such a Magazine of Words, as is adequate to all the Exigences of Speech; and, with a little Care and proper Digestion, capable of making *English* one of the most copious of all modern Tongues. For we have not sit down contentedly with what our Conquerors impos'd on us, but have made Excursions our selves into other Countries, and rais'd Contributions both from Ancients and Moderns, to enlarge our Patrimony. What free Commerce we have with the *Latin* Tongue; how many Roots, as well as Derivatives from the *Greek* and *Hebrew*; how many fair Scyons we have taken from the Gardens of *France*, *Spain* and *Italy*, cannot be unknown to any one, that is conversant with Languages.

The learned * *Cambden* has given us a Catalogue of Original *Greek* Words, that have an Identity, as he calls it, with ours. 'Twould be no hard Matter or furnish out a List from other learned Languages ; but my *English* Reader will be content, I hope, to know, that from the *Italians* we borrow the Words *Colonel*, *Captain*, *Banner*, *Bastion*, *Gabion*, *Parapet*, and many more military Terms, as well as such as related to Musick, Painting, Building, and some other Sciences, for which their Nation has been very famous. From the *Spaniards* we have *Azar*, *Viol*, *Violin*, *Guitar*, *Buffet*, and the Ladies their *Alcôves*, *Tasseties* and *Brocades*. What Freedom we have taken with the *French*, would be infinite to tell. We have naturaliz'd indeed almost every Thing that is Significant among them ; and 'tis much to be wish'd, that we would stop our Hands in time, before the Strength and Sinews of our Language be impair'd by too close a Commerce with *one*, that visibly wants them. If we think we have not yet enough, if we must still needs be borrowing, let us go to *such* as are Rich, to *such* as have Stores, that are inexhaustible, Words and Numbers that are establish'd, and Periods that best conform to the natural Cadency of our own.

It must be own'd then, that our Language, which not only has such a Fund and Stock of its own, but borrows likewise from other Nations, and makes, as it were, free Booty wherever it comes, cannot but be rich and abundant in all manner of Expressions.

* *Vid.* Remains, p. 32.

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But because the Design of Speech is to be understood, and a Multitude of Words will not do without an apt Construction, it hence comes to pass, that another great Requisite in any Language is Plainness and Perspicuity. Let us then see how it stands with our Tongue in relation to this.

IL M. Le Laboureur, in his *Advantages of the French Tongue*, has taken great Pains to shew, that the Order of Words in Composition (to make a Tongue perspicuous) should follow the Order of our Thoughts, and is highly offended at the *Greeks* and *Romans* for transposing their Words so licentiously, and thereby perplexing their Sense. ' Every Man, * says he, has but ' the same End in speaking, which is to be ' understood; but 'tis plain, that if we change ' the natural Course of our Thoughts, by in- ' verting the Order of our Words, this will ' occasion a Confusion, and produce an Effect ' quite contrary to the Institution of Speech. ' Thus, for Instance, says he, if I were to ' speak of the Eloquence of *Nestor* in a *figura- ' tive* Manner, in order to give my Reader some ' great Idea of it, the first Thing, that occurs ' to my Thoughts, is his *Speech*: Then to denote ' the Facility and Copiousness of it, I resenti- ' ble it to some large River, and so I say *it flows*, ' and because Sweetness, as well as Copiousness, ' is requisite to the Perfection of Eloquence, I ' add, it flows *sweeter than Honey*, and from ' whence? from *his Tongue*. This is the true ' Order

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* Vid. Page 149.

‘ Order of Conception in our Minds, and in
 ‘ this manner it should be express’d in Words,
 ‘ *The Speech of Nestor flows sweeter than Honey*
 ‘ *from his Tongue*; for here every Word in the
 ‘ Construction has the same Rank and Position
 ‘ it had in the Thought, and conveys the same
 ‘ easy Perception to the Hearer. Whereas the
 ‘ *Latin* way of expressing it, *ex ejus Ore melle*
 ‘ *dulcior fluebat oratio*, is but putting the Cart
 ‘ before the Horse, as he calls it, and an In-
 ‘ version of the Thought, that distracts the
 ‘ Mind, at least, keeps it in suspense, till the
 ‘ Period is done.

Every Language, it must be own’d, has its
 particular Genius; and Plainness and Perspicui-
 ty may, in a great measure, belong to the
French: but the Author of the *Advantages* here
 makes a Virtue of what, in reality, is a Necessi-
 ty in that Tongue, as well as in all others,
 where their Nouns have neither Gender nor Case.
 We in our Tongue follow the natural Order of
 our Thoughts, (tho’ not so strictly as the *French*)
 but ’tis because we are compell’d to it for the
 Prevention of Ambiguity, which would neces-
 sarily ensue, if we give ourselves too great a La-
 titude in Transposition: but this Inconvenience
 is not to be fear’d in Languages, whose different
 Terminations denote their Gender and Case.
 Thus, *Hominem fecit Deus*, or *Deus fecit Homi-*
nem in *Latin* is the same Thing; but in *English*,
God made Man, or *Man made God*, quite the con-
 trary. We are forc’d therefore to avoid too
 frequent Transpositions, in order to be under-
 stood; but the *Greeks* and *Romans* were not un-
 der that Necessity, because the Termination of
 their Noun regulated their Sense: and happy it
 was

was for them that they were not, because thereby they obtain'd vast Advantages to themselves in Point of Harmony and Cadence. The Liberty they took, in transposing a Word from its natural Situation, to a Place where it fell in more agreeably with the Pronunciation of what went before, or what follow'd after, gave a vast Scope and Currency to their Eloquence, besides a wonderful Delection to the Ear.

There are, in my Opinion, but two Things principally to be consider'd in every Language, viz. what Signification the Words convey to the Mind; and what Pleasure they give to the Ear. The Mind is satisfied with the Order of our Ideas, and the Neatness of our Expressions; but the Ear does not attend to that so much, as to the Sound, and Melody, and Cadence of them. Though therefore these Transpositions of Words may occasion some small Trouble to the Mind, in sorting and reducing them into their proper Places; yet the Pleasure, which the Ear receives from the Harmony they occasion, is more than an equivalent Compensation. But after all, it must be own'd, that Transpositions, when they come to be too frequent, so as to perplex and embarrass the Sense, cannot be excusable in any Language whatever, nor may the Sound of any Period commute for its Obscurity. ' But then, ' if * it be in the Power of a Tongue to join ' the Sweetness of Harmony, and the natural ' Order of Ideas together, so as to make them ' go on in the same agreeable Cadence, as ' those who mix, and blend, and transpose their ' Words

* *Vid. Sorbier's Lettér to the Duke of Chivrense.*

‘ Words for the sake of Number, like People
 ‘ in a Dance; it is not to be doubted, but that
 ‘ such a Tongue deserves a Preference before
 ‘ one, that brings them out in Rank, one after
 ‘ another, and by the way of formal and dull
 ‘ Proceſſion.

This, if I miſtake not, is, in a great Measure, the Character of our Language. We ſpeak, for the generality, in the Order our Thoughts dictate, ſo that our Language has all the Perſpicuity that Particular can afford us; and yet we ſometimes deviate a little from that Order, where the Grace of Diction, the Cadence of a Period, or the Force of an Expreſſion ſeem to require it, which gives our Language no ſmall Pre-eminence, and a ſkilful Writer a fair Opportunity to diſtinguiſh himſelf.

III. Another Quality, in the Excellency of any Language, is, the Strength and Significancy of its Expreſſions: For it is not enough that we have a competent Number of plain and intelligible Words, we ſhall have occaſion, many times, for *lofty* and *pathetick*, and ſhall want to explain ourſelves upon a vaſt Variety of Subjects: let us then ſee what our Language can ſupply us with upon ſuch Occaſions. It is, indeed, a Compilation, as I ſhew’d, of what is beſt, and moſt ſignificant out of other Tongues; and if the Performances of our Authors may be thought a good Proof of its Expreſſivenels, there is no Science ſo refin’d, no Argument ſo abſtruſe, as may not be treated in it, with all imaginable Succeſs. The Orator, the Poet, the Philoſopher, Men of all Arts and Sciences, in ſhort, write in our Tongue with the ſame Propriety

priety and Diversity of Stile, as in the most learned Language. Our Divines are justly celebrated in all the *Christian* World; but 'tis to the Strength and Nervousness of the Tongue wherein they write, as well as the Truth of the Doctrine, and Vivacity of the Sentiments, they deliver, that a good Part of their Glory is to be ascrib'd. Our Physicians have been long applauded in the learned World, and (what redounds at last to their own Commendation, as well as the Honour of their native Tongue) can explain themselves as elegantly in *English*, as *Galen* could have done in *Greek*, or *Fernel* in *Latin*. Our Historians have shewn the Applicableness of our Tongue to the Matter of Narration; and what is wrote of the *Rebellion* and *Reformation*, will be a lasting Monument of its Extensiveness, as well as the Greatness of those Revolutions. *Lock* upon *Human Understanding*, and *Burnet* in his *Theory of the Earth*, have carried our Language, with great Success, into the most abstruse Questions of natural and metaphysical Knowledge. Our Translators, (such as have been of Ability to penetrate the Sense of their Authors) have display'd the Power of our Tongue with great Advantage; and one Fable in *Sir Roger L'Estrange* is as much an Instance of its Sufficiency in *simple* and *easy* Diction, as *Mr. Pope's Homer* shews, how near a Copy may approach the loftiest *Original*. Our Poets, indeed, have been very successful in their way; but 'tis owing, in some measure, to the Language wherein he wrote, that *Milton* leads out his embattled Angels with so much Strength; that *Shakespeare's* Pictures of Nature are so just and noble; that *Otway's* Grief is so awful and

com-

commanding; that *Dryden's* Descriptions are so beautiful; *Congreve's* Wit so easy and genteel; and *Wicherley's* Satyr so strong and pointed. I admire the Writings of *Denham*, *Suckling*, and *D'Avenant*; am ravish'd with the Fancy of *Cowley*, with the Gallantry of *Waller*, with the easy and lofty Muse of *Prior*, and think that *Butler* is inimitable: But, for all this, I cannot but conceive, that there is something in the Tongue itself that gave a vast Help to their Fancy; an Easiness sometimes, and sometimes a Loftiness of Expression, that embellishes the Thought not a little: and, for this Reason, I am apt to believe it is, that our Tragedians have better succeeded in their Compositions than any other Nation. The Strength, the Life, the Vigour of our Tongue, the Softness of its Cadence in some Words, and the rapid Concurrence of its harsher Consonants in others, give Grief and Rage their different Turns, and are mightily assistant to the Poet's Passion. They follow, indeed, his Sentiments naturally, and come crowding in upon him, as he is meditating his Subject. But, however that be, 'tis a sure Argument, that a Language is very Significant and Expressive, when so many different Things, in so many different Manners, can be handled with all the Life and Elegance imaginable.

IV. There is but one Quality more that I account Essential to the Excellency of any Language, and that is, the Sweetness and Harmony of its Cadence: for it is not enough that the Mind be instructed, unless the Ear be, in some measure, satisfy'd; *Aures enim, vel Animus aurium*

aurium Nuncio naturalem quandam in se continet vocum omnium mentionem; &c. *. Let us then see of what Efficacy our Language is, as to the Gratification of the Ear.

Letters we know are of a different Pronunciation: Some go off more smoothly, some more roughly from the Tongue; and 'tis the Beauty of a Language, in Point of Harmony, when the Strong and Weak, the Soft and Harsh are so intermixt, as to support the Majesty of the Sound, without the letting it glide away, or fall into a faint Eccho. And accordingly we may observe, that the best Refiners of their Tongues have been as solicitous to avoid the frequent Concurrence of Vowels, which make the Tone languid, as that of Consonants, which make it too strong: Thus the *Greeks*, instead of *Kal iya*, say *Kaya*, and instead of *diduxi aurā*, (where the two Vowels meeting together made a *Void*;) intercert a Letter, and say *diduxer aurā*.

To apply this to our present Purpose. Our Language is loaded with Consonants indeed, and, in what we retain from our *Saxon* Ancestors, is very harsh and rough in its Pronunciation; but then, considering the great Accessions we have had from other Languages, that are more melodious, it is not out of the Power of a skilful Writer, so to prevent the Concurrence of sharp Consonants, so to dispose his Words, and adjust his Periods; to intersperse Things, as his Ear requires them, here to put a softer, there a rougher Sound, here a shorter, there

* Tull. Orator. p. 709. ex Edit. Bleau.

there a longer Termination; to mellow or sharpen the Tone by the Intervention of contrary Accents; and to carry the Sentence on to such a Rotundity, as not to discover any want of Harmony; and in this the Quintessence of fine *Prose-Writing* consists; as * one of the greatest Masters of that Art has told us.

The Ancients indeed are very exact in the harmonious Part of Eloquence; they descend to the last Detail, counting the very Feet and Syllables, and teaching us what Measures are proper for the Beginning, what for the Middle, and what for the Conclusion of every Sentence; but their Rules will not agree with the Nature of a Language, whose Mensuration is not adjusted. We may not then perhaps have all the Variety of Measures, which the *Greeks* and *Latins* make so great boast of; but there are other Things equally contributing to Harmony, wherein we are not defective. There is a Variety of Words of all Lengths; a Variety of Terminations of all Sounds; a Power of compounding Words to a great Degree, of mixing long and short Sentences together, and of giving such a Turn to the Diction, as fills the Ear. There are some Phrases likewise, that seem to resemble Verse, and others that have a relation to each other, either upon account of their Opposition,

or

* Neque est ex multis res una, qua magis Oratorem ab Imperito dicendi, ab ignaroque distinguat; quam quod ille rudis, & in condis fundit, quantum potest; & id, quod dicit spiritum, non arte determinat; Orator autem, sic illegat sententiam Verbis, ut eam numero quodam complectatur, & adstricto & soluto. Cic. Orat. p. 549.

or their Equality or Inequality: These we have in common with the Ancients, and these are the only Sources from whence our Harmony in Prose-Compositions can arise.

We affect not then to come up to the Softness and melting Tone of some of our Neighbours, who have spoil'd their Sinews to meliorate their Sound. Our Language is strong and masculine, bold and majestic; but there is Musick, I hope, in a Trumpet, as well as in a Flute or Guitar.

Our Writers, it must be own'd, before the Revolution; had few of them any Notion of Harmony in Prose. They chop and curtail their Sentences, or else draw them out to unmerciful Length. They load them with Parenthesis, and many times throw the Matter of five or six Periods into one; but their Language, or their Posterity (that have adventur'd to do better) is not to be charg'd with the Faults of particular Men, that were carried away with a deprav'd Taste, or knew not how to make the best Use of what Advantages they had in Hand.

Our Poets, however, have long ago given us great Proof of the Power of our Language in Point of Harmony. Chaucer and Spenser's Versification is not amiss: and tho' Softness be not its proper Genius, yet Mr. Dryden in one particular * Ode, and † Mr. Addison in a kind of Opera-Performance, have let the World see, how capable it is of the greatest Variety of

* On St. Cecelia's Day.

† Fair Rosamond.

of Numbers, and the tenderest Notes of Musick.

Pindar is justly esteem'd, both for flowing Diction, and his daring Flights; and yet, if *Mr. Cowley* may be thought not to follow him with an equal Pace, *Mr. Prior*, I think, in one single Attempt of this Nature, has out-done him.

*Tet whether would the adventurous Goddess go?
Sees she not Clouds, and Earth, and Main below?
Minds she the Danger of the Lybian Coast?
And Fields, where mad Bellerephon was lost? &c.*

*Tet upward she incessant flies,
Resolv'd to reach the high Imperial Sphere,
And tell great Jove she sings his Image here, &c.
Till, lost in trackless Fields of shining Day,*

*Unable to discern her Way,
Which Nassau's Virtue only could explore,
Untouch'd, unknown to any Muse before;
She from the noble Precipice is thrown,
Comes rushing with uncommon Ruin down,
Glorious Attempt, &c.*

I spoil the Number, in some measure, by cutting short my Quotation; but the whole Ode, besides the Dignity of the Sentiments, is truly Dithyrambick in its Stile, and a glorious Instance of the original Goodness of our Tongue.

Homer is deservedly reputed very happy in his Versification, and has a peculiar Talent (as *Longinus* observes) of expressing his Sentiments in the Sound, as well as Sense, of his Words. *Mr. Pope*, if I mistake not, has done that Justice to our Tongue, as to shew it almost

most adequate to the *Greek* in this respect, and, under what View soever the Object is consider'd, his Words and Numbers have always a Conformity.

*The dreadful Ægis, Jove's immortal Shield,
Blaz'd on her Arm, and lighten'd all the Field,
Round the vast Orb an hundred Serpents roll'd;
Form'd the bright Fringe, and seem'd to burn in
(Gold*:*

The Version is certainly better than the Original in this, that it shews the Refulgency of the Thing, it means to represent, in a fairer Light.

*Murm'ring they move, as when the Ocean roars,
And heaves huge Surges to the trembling Shores.
The groaning Banks are burst with bellowing Sound,
The Rocks remurmur, and the Deep's rebound †.*

The very Sound of the Words, you perceive, convey an awful Idea, even tho' a Man had never seen the Swelling, nor heard the Noise of that boisterous Element.

Homer, as Criticks observe, is very remarkable for leading out an Army in Battle-Array, and teaches us, in the gradual Increase of the Sound of his Words, the manner of their March, and advance to the Enemy; nor is his Translator inferiour in this respect.

* Vid. Pope's *Homer*, pag. 326.

† *Ibid.* pag. 249.

*As when the Winds, ascending by Degrees,
 First move the whit'ning Surface of the Seas,
 The Billows float in order to the Shore,
 The Wave behind rolls on the Wave before,
 Till with the growing Storm the Deeps arise,
 Foam o'er the Rocks, and thunder to the Skies.
 So to the Fight the thick Batallions throng,
 Shields urg'd on Shields, and Men drove Men
 (along *.*

The Description that *Homer* gives us of the Battle of the Gods, in his 20th Book, has something prodigiously great and magnificent in it; and, besides the Sublimity of the Thought, contains, as it were, a Sound of Horror and Dreadfulness in the very Words. The famous *Boileau*, in his Edition of *Longinus* in French, has given us this Translation of one Passage:

*L'Enfer s'émeut au Bruit de Neptune en furie,
 Pluton sort de son Trône, il pâlit il s'ecrie ;
 Il a peur, que ce Dieu, dans cet effzeux séjour,
 D'un Coup de son Trident, ne fasse entrer le jour ;
 Et par le Center ouvert de la Terre ébranlée,
 Ne fas voir du Styx la Rive désolée ;
 Ne découvre aux vivans cet Empire odieux,
 Abhorré des Mortels, et craint même des Dieux.*

Let us then see whether it makes not as good an Appearance in English.

Above

* Vid. *Pope's Homer*, pag. 478.

*Above the Sire of Gods in Thunder rolls,
And Peals on Peals redoubled rend the Poles.
Beneath stern Neptune shakes the solid Ground,
The Forests wave, and Mountains nod around.
Deep in the dismal Regions of the Dead,
The infernal Monarch rear'd his horrid Head;
Leap'd from his Throne, lest Neptune's Arms should
(lay,
His dark Dominions open to the Day, &c.*

But I forget my self, as I always do, when I wander in the Maze of the many Beauties of that great Man, *Cui mens divinator, atque os magna sonaturum.*

What I have said is enough to shew, that our Language wants not Number and Harmony, Strength and Energy, Riches and Copiousness, Clearness and Perspicuity; that its Words are expressive, its Periods strong, and its Sounds melodious; when it falls into a skilful Hand, and is carried up to the Pitch of Purity and Elegance, that it will bear.

But is it therefore arriv'd at its utmost Perfection? Is there nothing that ought to be added, or subtracted from it? * *Has it, at this Day, all the Advantages and Excellencies, that its Nature admits of?* I am sorry to say, that we are led away with too fond an Admiration of our own Age and Nation, when we think so; and have the Opinion of a very ingenious

O 2

Writer

Vid. Mr. Welsted's Dissertation concerning the Perfection of the English Tongue.

Writer to support me, when I affirm, that there are many Alterations to be made, much to be added, and much amended and reform'd, before the Structure can, in any degree, be deem'd compleat. For, * “beside the Grammar part, “wherein we are allow’d to be very defective, “it is no hard Matter to observe many gross “Improprieties, which, however authoriz’d “by Practice, and grown Familiar, ought to “be discarded; many Words, that deserve to “be utterly thrown out of our Language; “many more to be corrected; and, perhaps, “not a few, long since antiquated, which deserve to be restor’d, on account of their “Energy, and Sound. But besides the vulgar Elements of Speech, Are all our Phrases, in common use, full and significant? Are all our Figures easy, and natural, and wisely, as well as boldly, chosen? And is there no Turn to be given to our Periods, to make them go off with a better Grace, and given more Pleasure to the Ear? Our Congregations, I am apt to believe, would be more vigilant, and our Preachers no less edifying, if they could once persuade themselves of what Tully taught the World so long ago, † *Esse quosdam certos Cursus & Conclusiones Verborum, quibus aures delectantur.* In short, have we attain’d to the utmost Perfection of all Arts and Sciences? (for they are the Measure of a Tongue’s Proficiency) have we, from other Languages, naturaliz’d all the Terms,

* Swift’s Letter.

† Cic. Orat. pag. 739.

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Terms, that suit with the Idiom of our own? And are there not some that ought to be dis-infranch'd again, as incompatible therewith? Above all, Is the Orthography and Signification of our Languages settled? Have we a certain way of Writing, and a determinate Sense fix'd upon every Word, from whence we may not swerve? What the Labours of an * ingenious Gentleman may produce, Time will discover; but till we are supply'd with some such Help, as he designs, we write by Guess, more than any stated Rule, and form every Man his Diction, either according to his Humour and *Caprice*, or in pursuance of a blind and servile *Imitation*.

I have never known this Town, says a very great † Master of Stile and Observation, without one or more *Dunces* of Figure, who had Credit enough to give Rise to some new Word, and propagate it in most Conversation, tho' it had neither Humour nor Significancy. If it struck the present Taste, it was soon transferred into the *Plays*, and current *Scribbles* of the Week, and so became an Addition to our Language; while the Men of Wit and Learning, instead of early obviating such Corruptions, were too often seduc'd to imitate, and comply with them. Several young Men at the University, terribly possess'd with the Fear of *Pedantry*, run into a worse Extream, and think that all Politeness consists in reading the daily

O 3

Trash,

* Swift's Letter.

† Mr. Philips's *Proposals for a Dictionary*.

Trash, that proceeds from the several Presses in Town. Being thus furnish'd, they come up; reckon all their Errors for Accomplishments; borrow the new Set of Phrases; and, if they take Pen in their Hands, all the odd Words they have pick'd up in a Coffee-house, or, Gaming-Ordinaries, are produc'd as Flowers of Stile. Nay, our very Poets (continues the same Author) especially since the Time of the *Restoration*, tho' they could not but be sensible how much our Language is already overstock'd with Monosyllables, yet, to save themselves Time and Pains, have introduc'd a barbarous Custom of abbreviating Words, to fit them to the Measure of their Verses; and this they have frequently done so very injudiciously, as to form such harsh unharmonious Sounds, that none, but a *Northern Ear*, can endure them. They have join'd the most obdurate Consonants, without one intervening Vowel, only to shorten a Syllable, and their Taste in time has become so deprav'd, that, what was at first a *Poetical Licence*, not to be justified, they made their Choice; alledging, that the Words pronounc'd at length, sounded faint and languid: and, under this Pretence, even Prose writers, who lay under no such Restraint, have been induc'd to embrace the same Error.

Such are the Imperfections, which naturally adhere to our Language, and such the ill Precedents, which we every where meet, and are apt to infect us: but now the Question is, What possible Means can be found out, to bring Matters of this Nature to better Regulation.

I An * Author of great Judgment and Sagacity has help'd us to an Expedient, which if it were put in Practice, would effectually do the Work; and that is, the *Institution of an Academy* for the purifying and perfecting our Tongue. " I know indeed, says he, that " the *English* Genius is not so airy and discursive, as that of some of our Neighbours, " (meaning the *French*) but love to have Reason set out in plain Expressions, as much as " they, to have it delivered with Colour and " Beauty. They have one great Assistance, too " to the Growth of Oratory, which to us is " wanting: their Nobility live commonly close " together in Cities; ours, for the most Part " scatter'd in their Country-Houses; and yet " it is from frequent Conversation, that the " Humour, and Wit, and Variety, and Elegance of a Language are chiefly to be fetch'd. " But, notwithstanding these Discouragements, " I shall not stick to say, that such a Project " is now, seasonable to be set on foot, and " may make a great Reformation in the manner of our Speaking and Writing. The Truth " is, the *English* Tongue has been too much " neglected, and hitherto had less Labour " spent about its polishing, than it deserves. " Till the Time of *Henry* the Eighth, there was " scarce a Man regarded it, but *Chaucer*; and " nothing was written in it, that one would " have read twice, but some of his Poetry;

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" but

* *Bishop Sprat in his History of the Royal Society, pag. 40, &c.*

“ but then it began to raise itself a little, and
 “ to sound tollerably well. From that Age,
 “ down to the beginning of the Civil Wars,
 “ it was still fashioning and beautifying itself.
 “ With the *Restoration* many out-landish Phrases
 “ were brought in, and made free, as Men
 “ pleas’d; and it was enlarg’d too with many
 “ found and necessary Terms and Idioms,
 “ which it before wanted. But all this was
 “ done by private Hands, and arose fortuitously,
 “ rather than from any form’d Design. Now
 “ when Men’s Minds are somewhat settled,
 “ their Passions are allay’d, and the Peace of
 “ our Country gives the Leisure for such Di-
 “ versions; if some sober and judicious Men
 “ would take the whole Mass of our Language
 “ into their Hands, as they find it, would set
 “ a Mark on ill Words, correct those, which
 “ are to be retain’d, admit and establish the
 “ good, and make some Emendations in the
 “ Accent and Grammar; I dare pronounce,
 “ that our Speech would quickly arrive at as
 “ much Plenty, as it is capable to receive,
 “ and at the greatest Smoothness, which its
 “ Derivation from the rough *German* would al-
 “ low it.

And if that learned Historian thought it no
 improper time to set about a Work of this Na-
 ture, just as the Nation had escap’d from a long-
 continued State of Rebellion; much more will
 it be seasonable for us now, when (under the
 Influence of his Majesty’s Counsels) an univer-
 sal Peace and Tranquility, not only in *Great-
 Britain*, but all *Europe* over, gives us a fair Oppor-
 tunity of improving in all Kinds of Literature.
 We want not Men sufficient for the Work,
 nor

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nor a Strength of Genius to perfect it. We want not a Road chalk'd out for our Endeavours; for Mr. Pellison, in his History *De l'Academie Francoise*, has shewn us in what Method we are to proceed. We want not Encouragement to animate our Endeavours, nor need we doubt, that his Majesty, whose Heart is so truly *English*, and his Bounty for the Advancement of other modern Languages among us so conspicuous, will come behind any of his Royal Predecessors, in communicating his Favour and Protection to any *Society* of Men, that shall combine together for the Improvement of their own. And it should raise our Emulation, one would think, at this Conjunction, to let the World see, that, among the many substantial Blessings, wherein we surpass other Nations, we are not behind them in the Ornaments of Eloquence, and in the Form of a Language; which, with a little Pains and Emendation, may be rais'd to as great a Purity and Perfection, as any. Nor is the Attempt to be accounted a trivial Matter, since Purity of Speech, and Greatness of Empire, have in all Countries, met together; since the *Greeks* spoke best, when they were in the Glory of their Conquest; and the *Romans* made that Time the Standard of their Wit, when they subdu'd, and gave Laws to the World. But the chief Care of such a *Society*, as I am proposing, should be, to find out some Method, whereby to fix and ascertain our Language for ever, after such Alterations are made in it, as shall be thought requisite: Nor can I conceive the Thing impossible to be done, considering

dering * how long the Purity of the Greek Tongue may be said to have lasted; † how ancient the *Chinese* have Books in their Language at this very Day, and what few or no Changes have happen'd in the *German*, *Spanish* and *Italian*, for some Ages past. Only when I say, that, (after a due Correction of our Language) I would have it fix'd, I do not mean that it should never be enlarg'd: for considering the many Terms of Art, which are acquir'd in Trade and in War, the new Inventions, that happen in the World, the Improvement of Sciences, and the vast spreading of Navigation and Commerce, with many other obvious Circumstances, it cannot otherwise be, but that Additions to any Language (as the World increases in Knowledge) should daily be made; but || all that I mean is, that when once our Language is brought to a competent Standard of Purity, no Words, to which this Society shall give a Sanction (whatever new ones they may think proper to receive) shall ever after be antiquated and exploded; whereby Authors, as they grow old, may still continue valuable, according to their intrinsic Worth, and not be thrown aside, on account of unintelligible Words and Phrases, which appear harsh and uncouth only because they are out of Fashion. But till this can be done,

J. There

* From Homer to Plutarch are above a Thousand Years.

† Above two thousand Years old.

|| Vid. Swift's Letters.

II. There is another Expedient, that may not be inconduceable to the *Improvement*, at least, to the Prevention of any farther Decay of our Tongue; and that is, the *Regulation of the Press*, by such learned and impartial Hands, as may put a Stop to the Publication of such Books, as deprave the Taste, as well as Manners of the Nation, and give their Sanction to nothing, but what is Perfect in their Kind.

Lucian, in his witty and ironical Humour tells us of two ways, that will lead us to Eloquence, the one short and easy, and bestrow'd with Flowers, the other rough and tedious, and beset with Briars: *Labour* and Application is the one, and *Ignorance* and Frontery the other: and, in this Allegory, he introduces two Persons of very different Characters, each advising us to take the way that he directs. He, that pleads for *Industry*, is represented as a strong robust Person, with a grave severe Countenance. He offers to conduct the Lovers of Eloquence along the Path, that was once frequented by such as *Plato* and *Demosthenes*, but is now grown over with Brambles, tho' some Footsteps of these great Men are still to be seen in it. He warns them, that the least Deviation from the Path, that he points out, is falling down a Precipice; offers them nothing but the Speeches of the *Acients* of a strong and masculine Eloquence, for their Imitation; assures them, that, if they mean to succeed therein, they must Study; talks to them of Labours and Watchings, not for Months and Years, but for whole Lustras and Olympiads, and, all this while, enjoins them Abstinence, and to live secluded from the World.

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In the other Path he represents a Person well drefs'd, that looks Gay and Jolly, with a fine Mein and Eloquence, that would even charm one to follow him; despising the greatest Orators that went before him, and reckoning himself as much above them, as a Trumpet excels a Flute. " In the first Place, says he, I make no Account of Knowledge and Study: be but bold and hardy, and there is no Necessity to be learned. Get, in the next Place, rid of that Modesty, which makes you conceive too meanly of your self: look big, walk stately, be Gay in your Habit, and Pompous in your Retinue; and whatever you do, get a set of new Words and Phrases *a-la-mode*, and then you may write on all Subjects indifferently, without Stile or Diction, Method or Form. This was not indeed dull *Demosthenes's* way, but we live in another Age, and have a taste of Things more Polite. Above all (and let this be my chief Injunction) secure a Party to cry up your Works; commend your own, disparage all other Men's Performances; and if you follow this Course in *Publick*, I'll give you a Dispensation to live as idly, as you please at *Home*.

Whether of these two Guides have under their Care the present Set of Writers, I leave others to determine; and mean no more by this Suggestion, than how much it would tend to the Honour of our Tongue, as well as the Improvement of Learning in General, that the World be not impos'd upon by sham Titles; that cant Words, and Phrases of no Analogy with the Idiom of our Tongue, be rejected; that

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that the Itch of Writing be in some Measure allay'd; and the Pest of Books, whose Gilding and Lettering is their best Commendation, be not suffer'd to prey upon our Language, and corrupt our Taste. *And the only Means to bring this about,* says a very skilful * Judge, *is to settle a fix'd and impartial Court of Learning and Eloquence, according to whose Censure, all Books and Authors should stand or fall:* But this is a Project of too distant a Prospect; and till it can be happily effected.

III. Another Expedient, not unworthy the Consideration of such, as are entrusted with the Education of Youth, is, to have some of our best Authors, both in Verse and Prose, read in a *Classical* manner to their Pupils, and Exercises of all Kinds perform'd in their *Mother Tongue*. And whatever some little Pedants may think of this Proposal, the *Greeks* and *Romans*, who certainly knew the best Methods of advancing the Purity of their Languages, had their Children taught in the manner I am now suggesting. They had their own Authors read to them, their Beauties pointed out, and the Stile and Order of the whole Composition laid open and defect'd, for their Improvement and Imitation; and accordingly we find *Cicero* telling his Son, That while he went through a Course Philosophy under *Chrysippus*; Stile and Diction, and other Ornaments of Oratory, he must learn from his Writings.

Far am I from impairing the Merit of any learned Language, but, for my Heart, I cannot
con-

* *Sprat's History of the Royal Society*, pag. 48.

conceive, why a Tongue, wherein we are to act upon the Stage of the World, wherein we are to negotiate our Affairs, and display our Eloquence most, should be so entirely post-pon'd for what is not near so useful to us; for what we commonly forget, we seldom learn perfectly, and our Masters themselves have not often the Capacity to teach us. Nay, with all Deference to these learned Bodies, the two *Universities*, I have oft thought with myself, that if more *Latin* were heard in their private Conversation, and more *English* in their publick Schools, their Improvement in Learning (for Learning lies in Things, and not in Words) would not be retarded; our Bars and Pulpits would be fill'd with more Sufficiency; our Youth would be better qualified for Business; and Strangers more admire the Method of our Education: and in this I have the Happiness to concur with a Name of great Authority. "I am not unmindful, (* says our " Author) of the Devotion I owe to those " Places, nor of that Esteem I profess to have " for the Guides and Governours thereof; " as to go about to prescribe new Forms and " Schemes of Education, where Wisdom has " laid her Top-stone; but it may not be a- " miss to enquire, whether or no it were not " highly useful, that *English Exercises* were " impos'd upon Lads, in private, at least, if " not in their publick Schools. *Chicken-* " *Broth* is not thinner, than what is common
" by

* Echard's *Contem^y. of the Clergy*, pag. 37, 39.

“ ly offered in our Schools, for a Piece of most
 “ pleading and convincing Sense: whereas,
 “ if Lads were first of all to determine in
 “ *English* what they intend to say in *Latin*,
 “ they would, of themselves, soon discern the
 “ Pittifulness of their Matter, and the Imper-
 “ tinency of their Tales and Fancies; and,
 “ according to their Age and Parts, offer that
 “ which is much more manly and tollerable
 “ Sense. And (to speak freely) most of that
 “ Ridiculousness, fantastical Phrases, harsh
 “ Metaphors, foppish Similitudes, childish
 “ and empty Transitions, and the like, so
 “ commonly utter’d out of the Pulpits, and
 “ so fatally redounding to the Discredit of the
 “ Clergy, may in a great measure be charg’d
 “ upon the want of that, which we have here
 “ contested for.”

IV. But till these publick Expedients can be brought to bear, what is of private Use, and will prove very serviceable to the Refinement of our Tongue, will be reading the best Authors, and writing with great Care and Circumspection our selves. I say *the best Authors*, because nothing is more contagious than bad Models, when they have the publick Approbation; and one single Genius, with bright Qualities, and an extended Fame, has sometimes spoil’d the Taste of a whole Nation. But here the Question returns, who are the best Authors, and by what Characteristicks we may know them? The several Advocates for the *Ancients* and *Moderns* have disputed this Matter a little too eagerly, and carried their Resentments too far; for all im-
 partial

partial Men must agree, that, of what Age or Nation soever an Author be, who treats his Subject with a suitable Dignity, whose Notions are just, Diction lively, and Sentences numerous; who writes with Ease and Strength at the same time, and makes his Eloquence natural, imagestick, and uniform, is a fit Pattern for an Imitation: always supposing, that the Genius of the Tongue, wherein he writes, and the Length and Turn of the Period he gives himself, be, in some measure, conformable to ours. *Homer* and *Virgil*, *Tasso* and *Laboureur*, *Milton* and *Pope*, in the way of sublime Poetry; *Zenophon* and *Livy*, *Davola* and *Clarendon*, *Pellison* and *Sprat*, in the strong and clear Narration of History, are great Examples, and what we may * dwell upon with Profit. *Demosthenes* is a compleat Writer, *Aristotle* gives good Rules; and *Quintilian* is very minute in the Formation of his Orator: but there is none among the Ancients, from whom we can draw so much Benefit, so much Eloquence and Politeness, so much Solidity and good Sense, Stiles of so great a Variety, Diction so congruous, and Periods so consonant to the Nature of our Tongue, as *Cicero*; and 'twas the great Happiness of Eloquence, (as † one expresses it) that it chanc'd to fall into the Hands of one, who has not only carried it to the highest Pitch of Perfection himself, but given us likewise the best Rules to direct

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* *Certis Ingeniis immorari & contriri oportet.* Sen. Ep. 11.

† *Rapin's Preface to his Reflections on Eloquence.*

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tus in it : And among these, as I said before, writing our selves with the greatest Care and Circumspection is not the least. * *Stilus enim optimus & praestantissimus dicendi Effector & Magister : nec injuriâ*, for if (as he goes on) what we premeditate is more eloquent than what we speak *extempore* ; what we write will have this farther Advantage, that the most weighty and significant Terms and Expressions will become familiar to us by Practice, and the Structure and Conformation of our Words fall into an *Oratorical*, tho' not *Poetical* Number. The Truth is, the Habit of Writing works such Wonders, that some, I could name, with no great Abilities, and less Learning, have, meerly by the Dint of Exercise, wrought themselves up to a Propriety of Diction, and Fluency of Stile, that has gain'd themselves a Name, and brought no Dishonour to their Native Tongue ; and 'twere only to be wish'd, that such, as busy themselves in this Employment, would bear in Remembrance this Admonition, — That, in every Thing they publish, they are adding to the Stock of their Mother Tongue, and contributing either to its Abasement or Exaltation ; that, consequently, not only their own Name and Credit is at Stake, but that the Honour of their Nation, Opinion, that Foreigners will have of us, the Judgment of the present Age, and the Censure of Posterity, are all concern'd in what they do. *How would Homer have express'd this ?* Is the Incitement of *Longinus* to the Writers of

* *Vid. Tull. de Oratore, p. 334. ex Edit. Blean.*

his Age, wherewith I desire to close up mine: *What would Plato, or Demosthenes, or (if it be a Matter of History) what, would Thucydides have said in this Place?* These great Men, when presented to the Imagination in a lively manner, raise the Mind of a Writer to a kind of Equality with them: *If they were now here present, What would they say to us? What Judgment would they pass upon our Works?* It is no trivial Prize we are contending for, we should think, if we were once persuaded that our Writings were to be submitted to such an illustrious Tribunal, and expos'd upon the Theatre, where such great Masters were to be Judges: *But above all, what will Posterity say of us? and the Ages to come, what Censure will they put upon our Compositions?* This (as our Author concludes) is the most powerful Motive: The Man that writes for his own Age only, can never produce any Thing, but what is blind, abortive, and imperfect; because he will never take the Pains to make a finish'd Work of what he designs not for Posterity.

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